

Communards and Other Cultural Histories

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Communards and Other Cultural Histories

Essays by Adrian Rifkin

Edited by

Steve Edwards



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Translations from the French are by the author. Some minor edits have been made for consistency and we have filled out Rifkin's laconic citation style – we have left his Preface as an example. Artworks, music and novels are cited in the text by date of publication/issue. Unless details were given in the originals, nineteenth-century sources are referred to in the text by title and date of publication. No effort has been made to trace or check these works. The long, and now notorious, footnote in 2.5 'Ingres and the Academic Dictionary' has been retained, because it seemed integral to the history of this essay. Aside from these minor matters, these essays appear as they were published. Some images have been omitted and we have retained the quality in which some of them originally appeared.

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Adrian Rifkin, or from Art History in Ruins to a Lost Object

Steve Edwards

Nicos Hadjinicolaou wrote in *Art History and Class Struggle*: 'Today art history is one of the last outposts of reactionary thought'.¹ In 1973 when the English edition of his book appeared things were already changing. From that point through the 1980s a second wave of Marxist work emerged in the history of art or, to put this differently, a specifically New Left perspective took hold in the discipline.² Sometimes called the 'new-art history' or the 'social history of art', this trend recovered (unevenly) the earlier Marxist studies of Frederick Antal, Francis Klingender, Max Raphael, Arnold Hauser, Meyer Schapiro, the early essays of Clement Greenberg and others. As a New Left formation, historians and theorists also drew on Gramsci, the Frankfurt School (particularly Benjamin), Althusser and a host of other contemporary Marxist thinkers. This new perspective crossed over directly with debates in literary studies, film studies, history from below and emergent cultural studies. Pretty rapidly it fused with a second-wave Feminism.³ The new structure of feeling cohered around journals such as *Block*, *Histoire et Critique des Arts* and *Kritische Berichte*.⁴ In response to the standard art history of 'tired sensibility-plus-dates',⁵ this formation rediscovered critical and revolutionary moments in art, but it also considered the theoretical relation of art and history, raising important questions about ideology and representation. Market and museum received an intellectual pummeling. The German art-historian Kurt Forster argued the discipline 'was founded of three basic concepts: history of style, artistic biography, and the tradition of

1 Hadjinicolaou 1973, p. 4.

2 For a much fuller account than I can offer here, see: Hemingway 2006b, pp. 175–95; Roberts 1994, pp. 1–36; Orton & Pollock, 1996, pp. i–xxii; Bird & Tickner 1996, pp. xi–xiv; 3–5; and Day 2012.

3 Duncan 1993; Parker & Pollock 1981; Pollock 1982, pp. 2–21.

4 Other journals included *Wedge*, *Artery*, and *Oxford Art Journal*. Art historical work also appeared in *Screen*, *Screen Education*, *Art History*, *Marxist Perspectives* and other places. This history is still to be written.

5 Bird & Tickner 1996, p. 3.

imagery (or iconography):⁶ All viewpoints, he claimed, regarded art as independent from society. According to Forster, this approach treated '[h]istory as mere garnish'. Central to all this was criticism of the monadic expressive artist so central to mainstream discussions of art. To this effect, biography, the coherence of an oeuvre, intention, expression and the gender of genius were all put under the spotlight. The debate was much more extensive in the German speaking countries – centred on the *Ulm Verein für Kunst-und Kulturwissenschaften* (in 1977 UV had about 400 members and could rival the professional society) – but, arguably, the project has had a longer lasting impact in English-language thinking.⁷ As Perry Anderson observed, when Marxism collapsed in its traditional Latin strongholds, work continued in the English-speaking world.⁸ At least in art history, the debate continued in Britain and America after it largely subsided in Germany.⁹ With the exception of some ongoing intense work on recent art, this cycle may now have come to an end.

This volume brings together a selection of essays by Adrian Rifkin, who played an important role in these debates. Much of Rifkin's impact in art history derived from his presence in the classroom and conference hall. His seemingly unprepared lucidity and range of intellectual interests often make his oral performances, interventions and lectures dazzling. Much of his impact and reputation turns on such verbal appearances: in one memorable intervention he described E.H. Gombrich as a 'cultural terrorist' and on another occasion he claimed the problem for his 'generation of Marxist art historians was that there was no one worth spying for'.¹⁰ This said, Rifkin is the author of some of the most significant Marxist work in the discipline, primarily essays on the Commune and French Academic art. I make no bones about stating at the outset that this collection represents my Rifkin, the figure who worked in and through Marxism from the late 1970s into the 1990s and who offered highly suggestive ways of thinking about art, politics and history. Other selections from his work would draw out different strains in his thinking and strings to his bow. I have not included any of his art criticism, simply because I do not much like his taste in art. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the formation of many of

6 Forster 1972, p. 459.

7 In addition to Hemingway's essay on the New Left (see Hemingway 2006b), see also in the same collection: Held 2006, pp. 196–212.

8 See the first section of Anderson 1983.

9 O.K. Werkmeister, Benjamin Buchloh, Norbert Schneider and the late Jutta Held sustained commitments to various stripes of Marxism, but other prominent German art historians gave up on previous alignments. See Werkmeister 2006.

10 See 'Can Gramsci save Art History?' in this volume.

the ideas that appear here in the provincial art schools from the 1970s on. Rifkin worked in art schools throughout his career and this has enabled him to look askance at academic art history. His later writings in *Queer Theory and Cultural Studies* continue to draw on aspects of Marxism, but other questions, associated with psychoanalysis and post-structuralism, come to the fore. These other threads were always present in his scholarship and I would not wish to diminish their significance, but I hope this collection makes the case for considering Rifkin's explicit contribution to Marxist ways of thinking about art's histories.

Reading PPE at Oxford, Rifkin attended lectures by Edgar Wind and then went on to study art history with Helen Roseneau in Manchester and Arnold Noach at Leeds, writing a dissertation on Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Typically, his thesis remained unexamined (in 2000 an infinitely revised version appeared as *Ingres Then, and Now*).¹¹ Equally typically, at a time when British art history was dull as dishwater (he once referred to 'the suffocation of traditional art history'),¹² he managed to find his way to those representatives of the great German intellectual tradition who came to the UK as Jewish refugees from fascism. His thought is still marked by that encounter with the group of art historians that represented some odd amalgam of European high culture, philosophical alertness and wayward objects of study. Rifkin was intellectually precocious and perspicacious: he began reading *Tel Quel* during the 1960s; along with a few other art historians – including Tim and Charlotte Benton, Neil McWilliam, Alex Potts and Tom Gretton – he was involved in the Art & Society group of the History Workshop, whose central figure was Hannah Mitchell.¹³ He was one of only two native English speakers to publish in *Les Révoltes logiques*. However, during the 1970s he spent most of his intellectual energy in the avant-garde work of the Portsmouth Synfonia and the rounds and routines of Maoist activism.¹⁴ The art department of Portsmouth Polytechnic was a significant

11 Rifkin 2000.

12 Rifkin 1980, p. 37.

13 Benton 1979.

14 The Portsmouth Synfonia was an orchestra set up by students and staff of Portsmouth College of Art in 1970. While it included Gavin Bryers, Brian Eno, Michael Nyman and other professionals, the intention was to play popular classics regardless of the performer's level of individual skill. Whilst no one could play their particular instrument, the aim was to rehearse and try, to the best of one's ability, to play such works as the William Tell Overture, Blue Danube or the Hallelujah Chorus. The Synfonia released a number of albums and played at both the Royal Festival Hall and the Royal Albert Hall. Rifkin 'played' French horn. The Synfonia's final performance was given in 1979. In retrospect, the Synfonia looks like an incarnation of Rancière's philosophy of equality. Jeffrey Steele (trombone) told me

locus for Maoist cultural theorising. The painter Jeffrey Steele and composer Cornelius Cardew were particularly significant interlocutors who helped shape Rifkin's thinking on ideology and structural complexity. In 1979 he returned to writing art history.

There are two principles of selection for this collection of essays. The texts collected here are mainly those from the period of Rifkin's most intense engagement with Marxism; they are also studies rooted in archival research. Rifkin is a good archival historian. At the same time, his approach to historical work has been typically iconoclastic. He once told me, 'if you can think it, there will be evidence in the archive and the traces can be found'. The problem is to imagine what might be there. This is anti-empiricism as radical as anything to be found in Althusser. Rifkin begins by conceiving small *récits* and then tracks down the evidence. Some might call this postmodern history, but it really does depend on the stories. If the focus here is on his historical or archival-based essays, some other pieces have been included when they seemed to supplement or add something. Among the accompanying texts are position statements, such as his early engagement with Gramsci, or reflections on Adorno and Benjamin; others follow through a line of thought, tracing out a narrative or morphology through different historical phases. Paris is at the centre of these musings and it runs throughout these essays, providing a frame for considering such seemingly diverse themes as Academic aesthetics, the culture of the revolutionary workers' movement, popular entertainment and song, the figure of the Jew, and the topography of gay sex. Even when thinking about Bayreuth as a 'world city', Paris is in the background. The place of the 'city of light' in these essays makes Walter Benjamin a constant interlocutor. The points of continuity and repetition prove surprisingly common and oddly illuminating.

The collection is organised in four parts (with three short pieces appended as a sort of anti-conclusion). The first part 'New Art Histories' mixes occasional interventions such as 'Art's Histories'; 'Can Gramsci Save Art History?' and Rifkin's review of T.J. Clark's book on Manet and the Impressionists, with substantive explorations of Academic aesthetics and a study of the reception of Bizet's *Carmen*. In their different ways, these essays interrogate art history's relation to its objects of study, questioning not only the methodological procedures or forms of attention, but also the canon of art. Rifkin was among those who took the most extreme view on these matters, imagining, and delighting in, the impending ruin of the discipline. He wanted to destroy art history. His

that they stopped performing because they were becoming too competent. Rifkin was an activist in the Communist Party of England (ML), which was founded in 1972.

comment on the destruction of Ming tombs during the cultural revolution, which appears in his preface, the discussion of Wicar in the essay 'The Words of 'Art'...' (Chapter 1.7), and the final piece in this volume, chimes with that attitude. The second batch of work, 'Society, Image, Social Difference: Between the Paris Commune, the Salon and the People', contains some of Rifkin's most influential writing. These texts explore the connections and misprisions that occur between art and language and are rooted in archival studies of the art and industry. Rifkin does not engage in close readings of artworks, but neither is he a simple contextualist, rather he has always sought to imagine how the category of art and artworks enter history as characters or actors. This part presents important examples of this approach. The third part – 'Paris and More on the People' – traces some of his concerns with the idea of the people into twentieth-century representations of Paris. Here the category of 'the people' is increasingly differentiated to include representations of the Jew or considerations of gay Paris. The fourth part – 'Alternatives to the grander schemas, or resistance to the critique of grand narrative as a form of grand narrative' – collects reflections, principally on Benjamin and Adorno, and their shaping of cultural history. As indicated, the volume ends with three short pieces: the first is his earliest study of the Commune, the second a reflection on the work of the avant-garde composer turned Maoist militant, Cornelius Cardew; the third is a witty reflection on a lost object. It should be apparent that the essays that make up this volume are not organised chronologically, but gathered in associative clusters or lines of thought. Rifkin regularly returns to a particular object or theoretical problem and turns it around in order to work it over again. Many of the essays in this collection were written in an essayistic mode and I have added additional references to help the contemporary reader.

Various intellectual engagements run through the texts in this book. Marx and Freud are constant points of reference ('overdetermination' is central to Rifkin's conception of art and modernity). Adorno, the Bakhtin circle, Benjamin and Lefebvre all appear regularly. He has said that his early engagement with the work of Jacques Rancière was

strung out between the cumulative effects of Foucauldian notions of the archive on the one hand, Gramscian ideas of hegemony on the other, and a post-Thompsonian figuring of the lost voices of the people ... Which is to say a framework of social history, Birmingham Cultural Studies and an emerging 'new art history'.¹⁵

15 Rifkin 2005b, p. 96. Though he had some very critical things to say about Foucault in Rifkin 1980.

In fact, it might be argued that art history was one of the places where these approaches came together. Yet while the crossovers between these intellectual positions can be stimulating, they are not entirely congruent: for instance, it is not clear how Adorno's mandarin *Kulturkritik* or the 'modern prince' might be squared with Rancière's antipathy to all pedagogic authority. To this cluster of interests and perspectives must be added the work of the classic German art historians (and Antal, who was a Hungarian Marxist and refugee from the white terror). At times other figures, more distant from the Marxist tradition, have been prominent in his thinking: Lacan, Levi-Strauss, Derrida and Kristeva. Just as important have been the constant conversations with collaborators and friends: Jeffrey Steele has already been mentioned; he has maintained a long-term dialogue with art historians such as Carol Duncan, Tamar Garb, Griselda Pollock, Molly Nesbit, Susan Siegfried and Alex Potts; and a perpetual exchange with Kristin Ross, his fellow Francophile cultural historian. Feminist debate is central to his work; Guy Hocquenghem and James Baldwin were in the mix too as different guides to being gay. It is one of the most interesting aspects of his thought that he has been prepared to mix such points of reference with what he calls the 'green Engels' and William Morris; in the early 1980s his lectures were marked by ecosocialism. While Rifkin does not champion avant-garde art as a critical project (a common position among Marxist art historians) he takes avant-garde writing and thinking seriously for his own practice. Writing is important to him and his tone can shift, sentence to sentence, from gnomic to lachrymose. There is something pleasurable about his prose, but it is not always easy to read.

'... That Sphinx So Tantalizing To The Bourgeois Mind': The Paris Commune And Art History

In 1976 Rifkin turned to an exploration of the visual imagery (we might now say visual culture) of the Paris Commune. Setting aside the journalism he produced for *Workers' Weekly*, his first published essay (which perversely we include in the final part of this collection) was given as a talk at the inaugural session of the Marxist Caucus of the College Art Association.¹⁶ This early text – 'The Paris Commune of 1871 and Political Print' – already indicates what was to come. The topic seems like a natural enough choice for a Francophone Maoist tracing back the upheaval of the Shanghai Commune, the wall newspaper and the Cultural Revolution to the moment of 1871 and Marx's *The Civil War in France*.

¹⁶ Rifkin 1979a. The CAA is the professional body of North American art historians.

So, while this body of work indicates an archaeology of the Commune as an intervention into art history, it also entails a working through of the Commune-form, notions of 'the people' and popular imagery (the wall-mounted print). A commitment to using local material to open larger theoretical matters runs as a red thread throughout these essays.

The Paris Commune of 1871 occupies a central place in Marxist debate. All told, the writings of Marx and Engels on the war and the Commune – drafts, reports, speeches and letters – amount to around 600 printed pages in the English *Collected Works*.¹⁷ *The Civil War in France*, issued under the rubric of the International Working Men's Association, holds the key place and is one of the great examples of a 'concrete analysis of a concrete situation'. It is an extraordinary text full of compelling observations. Some scholars have made careers on less than Marx's throwaway line that Haussmann 'razed historic Paris to make place for the Paris of the sightseer'.¹⁸ In passing, Marx offers his fascinating reflections on the consolidation of a distinctly capitalist state, which took shape through successive French revolutions.¹⁹ It is, though, his comments on revolutionary democracy and the state that make this pamphlet such a significant theoretical resource. Marx wrote to Ludwig Kugelmann: 'If you look at the last chapter of my *Eighteenth Brumaire* you will find that I say that the next attempt of the French revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic military machine from one hand to another, but to *break* it, and this is the precondition for every real people's revolution on the Continent'.²⁰ The Commune confirmed for Marx and Engels that the state could not be taken over ready-made and indicated the form proletarian dictatorship could assume. It was 'the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of labour'.²¹ True, there were already intimations of this insight in the *Poverty of Philosophy*, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* and the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, but the actuality of the Commune – 'the great working measure of the Commune was its own working existence'²² – revealed the character of an anti-state state.²³ This form of democracy is now common knowledge on

17 Much of this material is to be found in Karl Marx & Frederick Engels 1986a.

18 Marx 1986c, p. 351.

19 The state is described as a 'national war-engine of capital against labour'. Marx 1986c, p. 330. These passages contain much of interest for the transition debate.

20 Marx 1989a p. 131.

21 Marx 1986c, p. 334.

22 Marx 1986c, p. 339.

23 Marx described the Commune as a revolution not against this or that form of state, but a 'Revolution against the State itself'. Marx 1986d, p. 486.

the left: Communes were to select assemblies of delegates, who in turn elect delegates to a national assembly. All officials of the Commune were to be elected, subject to recall and paid an average worker's wage (6,000 francs). Marx recognises the vital role played by women in the Commune, even as he failed to comment on the exclusion of women from the suffrage.²⁴ From 18 March 1871, (male) proletarian democracy existed in actuality.²⁵ After this date, Marx and Engels repeatedly point to the structures thrown up by the Commune as the basis for the future socialist organisation of society. For instance, this perspective was reiterated in the 1872 Preface to *The Communist Manifesto* and was drawn out in criticisms of both the Gotha Programme and the Erfurt Programme of German Social Democracy.²⁶ As Hal Draper notes, somehow this understanding got lost: 'In 1900 Charles Longuet, Marx's reformist son-in-law, edited a translation of the *Civil War in France*, but changed Marx's title to *La Commune de Paris* because "civil war" was a dirty word.'²⁷ Whatever the current debate on Erfurtian Marxism, in *State and Revolution*, Lenin disinterred this actuality of proletarian democracy.²⁸ The argument had been hidden in plain sight in the texts of Marx and Engels. At the time, Lenin's reconstruction seemed so odd that he was accused of Anarchism.

This is all familiar enough. What is perhaps surprising is how little attention has been paid to the cultural manifestations of the Commune, as if it were a purely political affair, with William Morris's *Pilgrims of Hope* tacked on as an appendix. From 1995 this obliviousness began to change. There are now three extensive studies of art in the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune in English and at least one in French.²⁹ These books are all useful contributions that present a wide range of artworks and other visual material for study. However, none of them fundamentally reshapes our understanding of the Commune and revolutionary culture in the way that Kristin Ross did with *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Commune*. Ross not only provided a detailed reading of Rimbaud's verse, tracing both his distance from the Parnassians of

24 For example, see Marx & Engels 1986b, p. 413, where they noted the role of women in the Commune and suggested the formation 'of purely feminine sections [of the International] in countries where industry employs women in large numbers'.

25 Lukács 1977.

26 Engels 1991; and Engels 1990, pp. 219–232.

27 Draper 1971, p. 9.

28 Lenin 1977, pp. 49–241. For Lenin and Erfurtian Marxism see: Lih 2008; For responses to Lih's book, see Blackledge, et al. 2010. Lih's careful and extensive study also contains his translation of Lenin's book.

29 Boime 1995; Milner 2000; and Clayson 2002; Tillier 2004.

his time and the avant-garde in terms of the Commune, but also offers fascinating reflections on the destruction of the Vendôme Column, the barricade as form and the spatial imagination in Communard thought and practice. This investigation is furthered in her recent *Communal Luxury*.³⁰ Rifkin's essays rank alongside Ross's important interventions. Not only were these texts a key locus for the development of the study of popular imagery, but the fragments he produced offer highly imaginative engagement with class, revolution and mass imagery.³¹ There are many crossovers in their work. Both Ross and Rifkin, who were in close conversation, reflect on shifting identification between workers and artists in the revolutionary moment and both are interested in the dynamism that enters language at such points of popular eruption. What is, perhaps, unique about Rifkin's Commune studies is their focus on bourgeois frenzy and *ressentiment*, and to this effect class struggle appears in the fantasmatic register. Typically, *ressentiment* has been perceived as a feature of a slave mentality or a herd instinct focused on all that is great. In these essays, it emerges as a form of middle-class hatred and fear of the people. Even in the quietest of times the bourgeoisie dreads rebellion and despises working people.

Rifkin's account of the Commune does not engage directly with Marx's account of working democracy. Instead, he draws centrally from the chiasmic turn performed in *The Civil War in France*. Marx hurled the accusations of Communard criminality back at the *capitulards*, representing the *Versillais*, their hacks and thugs as 'ticket of leave men'. Much of Marx's pamphlet is taken up with exonerating the Communards from calumny. To this effect he presents the denizens of *Versailles* as assassins, false patriots and fraudsters: men of 'place and pelf'; and of course he exposes the bloodbath that followed the final defeat of the Commune on the barricades of Belleville – that 'pandemonium' unleashed by 'the bloodhounds of "order"'.³² The theme of fear and hatred runs through Marx's commentary on the Commune and has been insufficiently noted. Rejecting the slurs against the Communards as a few criminals, Marx referred to 'the bourgeois *canaille* of Versailles'.³³ 'The old world', he said,

30 Ross, 2015.

31 Ross 1988. It may be in response to Ross that he would later write: 'For why should the aspirations of the Commune subliminate themselves only in twentieth-century communist politics? Are Verlaine's *Hombres*, his erotic poems to working boys, any less a register of the deepest desires for a utopian transformation of social relations?' (Rifkin 1993, p. 10).

32 Marx 1986c, p. 350.

33 Marx 1989b, p. 137. Jenny Marx called them the 'French *canaille* of order', which trips off the tongue a little better. Mrs Jenny Marx to Dr. Kugelmann May 12 1871, cited in Draper 1971, p. 222.

'writhed in convulsions of rage at the sight of the red flag'.³⁴ The Paris of Thiers was 'a phantom Paris' and, of course, Thiers himself was described as a 'monstrous gnome' (in the earlier drafts a 'mischievous gnome').³⁵ He discusses the 'cannibal exploits of the Versailles banditti',³⁶ and, in passing, alludes to blood-suckers and vampires. Whereas the bourgeoisie focused on the destruction of bricks and mortar and the assassination of a small number of prisoners,³⁷ Marx records the disturbing glee with which captured Communards and regular troops were abused and murdered and he demonstrates the paroxysms of violence unleashed in The Bloody Week. This is his attempt to find a form with which to describe a 'slaveholders' rebellion'.³⁸ We cannot be certain about the numbers of those slaughtered during the Bloody Week, but estimates run up to 50,000, with thousands more imprisoned or deported to New Caledonia. Comments on Marx's style have often focused on his literary erudition or deployment of gothic figuration in *Capital*.³⁹ The Commune texts echo the chiasmatic engagement with frenzy and a 'dialectic of fear'.

Rifkin's initial foray into Communard cultural politics involves both an engagement with the mass-produced prints that appeared from all sides during 1871 and a criticism of the depoliticised art history and exhibition policy of his time. In both cases he is attentive to the violence lurking in the bourgeois imagination. He suggests between twelve and fifteen millions of these posters or handbills were produced during the nine months of the siege, the Commune and its suppression. They came from all sides and were often crude in form and violent in content. Professional artists, with a few exceptions, stood above the fray; many left Paris for the safety of the countryside or London. He asks, '[a]re these works to be treated simply as background decoration, or can they be seen as rather more than that? Are they not, in fact, a forming element within the struggles that formed them?'⁴⁰ It is a question that will lead him to a series of sustained reflections on how Marxists should present the relation between images and other cultural forms and political struggle. The second main concern is an engagement with historiography. Rifkin suggests that in the immediate aftermath two contradictory bourgeois responses to the Commune are to be detected. In the flood of "histories", memoirs, biographical sketches,

34 Marx 1986c, p. 336.

35 Marx 1986c, p. 314.

36 Marx 1986c, p. 327.

37 Marx 1986c, p. 350.

38 Marx 1986c, p. 319. For a study of this kind of language in Marx, see McNally 2011.

39 Praver 1978; Moretti 1988; Baldick 1990; Keenan 1993; Derrida 1994; McNally 2011.

40 Rifkin 1979a, p. 33.

horror stories, and so forth', the Commune and its actors were demonised. As we have seen, Marx was attentive to this dimension of anti-Communard *resentiment*. This vitriolic bile was often condensed on the role women played in the revolutionary movement. As Rifkin argues: 'The women, accused by the Versaillais of burning the city of Paris, were signalled out for the wildest abuse – proclaiming a rosy dawn of red wine, mindlessly denouncing men and family in their popular clubs, always fat, ugly and hysterical'.⁴¹ The figure of the *pétroleuse* is a recurrent character in bourgeois nightmares and so it is no surprise to find such misogynist representations in the anti-Communard dreamwork.⁴² Rifkin fixes attention on those images that revolve around such nightmares.

This grotesquery was accompanied by a second, somewhat contradictory, response – the need to repress all memory of the Commune. If the first response is evident in the chattering scatological depictions of the Communards, the second is prominent in the histories of these printed images. At best, even on the left, the Commune print has appeared as mere background illustration to historical events. Rifkin traces this theme and finds it in the politics and art history of his own moment: one example, he suggests, is the Eurocommunist desire to retain formal fidelity to the Commune and Marx's important text, while abandoning the idea of the state as class dictatorship; another is to be seen in the 'whitewashing of the Second Empire' in a large exhibition of the time and the criticism associated with it that twittered on about 'a forgotten period of enlightened patronage' and presented a view of the period stripped of politics or the people. This was then to be a project of historical investigation that was highly conscious of the emplotments of its object in politics, art and history. This would lead Rifkin to reflect more widely on the role of class fantasy and loathing in politics and history.

This first preliminary study was extended as 'Cultural Movement and the Paris Commune' (also 1979) and followed with three other Commune studies: 'No Particular Thing to Mean' (1983); 'Well Formed Phrases' (1986); and 'Carmenology' (1988). To these could be added 'Musical Moments' (1987), which also engaged with Commune memory in the form of the novel *Philemon: vieux de la vielle* (1913) by Lucien Descaves. These texts form one core to this volume. In 'Cultural Movement and the Paris Commune', Rifkin reiterated the point that the mass-print culture of the Commune had been ignored or seen as a 'deviation from some idealised tradition'. In this essay he suggests that it was necessary to cease treating these images as a sub-branch of art history and look

41 Rifkin 1979a, pp. 33–4.

42 Ross 1988, p. 16.

at the way some inventive French historians were trying to understand the legal regulation of poetry and song in the Second Empire. Censorship law was perceived as a prism through which to 'embark on a precise periodisation and class analysis of the social movement that gave rise to it'. Here the legal control of journalism and popular entertainment in the form of café song are taken to offer a perspective on the development of the material practices of image production in the Second Empire and its politicisation under the Commune. The state and the market followed distinct tracks. *Reading Capital* aside, this may be the first reference to the work of Jacques Rancière and *Les Révoltes logiques* in a work of British cultural history. Rifkin's innovative essay is full of suggestions for research. It is, though, a transitional study and two problems need to be flagged: first, the author sees popular culture as directly related to an autonomous culture of the working class; the popular and the people are coterminous. In this case, the state works to prevent the articulation or fully conscious emergence of this class culture. Secondly, as a consequence of this perception, the print culture of the Commune is seen as a 'sensitive indicator' of political and social movement, which erupts elsewhere in the principle of cooperation and association that underpinned all aspects of working-class politics from the 'organisation of the workshop to the ideals governing family relations'. In both instances class precedes its representations. Cultures and representation are seen to be homogenous and outcrops of a particular group, rather than fields of struggle. Rifkin had not fully broken with the strain of analysis that saw the image culture as a backdrop to real politics.

'No Particular Thing to Mean' continued this research programme, examining ten specific prints, but now class struggle also takes place at the level of the sign. He argues that the collapse of the censorship system meant that the censors ceased to constitute the first audience for cartoonists and 'the entire period from September 1870 to June 1871 was one of unparalleled experimentation in political imagery in France'.⁴³ A comment on the newspaper *l'Homme* can serve as an indication of the shift in reading ideology evident in this essay. Rifkin suggests: 'it is precisely through the dominant vocabulary that it [*l'Homme*] produces and communicates its positions, and structures them into political enjoinders and invocations, slogans and other calls to action, that are part of the political psychology of the revolutionary process'.⁴⁴ Ideology or representation comes to be seen in this study as a reworking of available signs. Now, these prints are seen as 'phonemes of social discourse' (such as the rising sun motif)

43 Rifkin 1983a, p. 43.

44 Rifkin 1983a, p. 42.

and displacements between 'political positions and positions within social discourse'.⁴⁵ Ideologies of revolution, class and gender provide the ground that is reworked in these images, but the images are not reflections or expressions of these social locations.

In addition, Rifkin makes apparent his implicit criticism of the social history of art or new art history that was becoming increasingly prevalent at this time. The attention to non-canonical images, such as the mass-print culture that was implicit in the earlier essays, becomes explicit here.

In some respects the new and progressive art-histories of the last decade, that have embarked on particular methods of historicising the art-work, have as much intensified the problems as they have resolved them ... But in one way or another, we are always left somewhere in the Louvre or, of late, in the Jeu de Paume. That is to say, in a highly privileged space, one of whose functions remains the equipment of our cultural outlooks with the hierarchies of its privileges.⁴⁶

The Louvre as it appeared in the work of the new art history, he argues, is evidently a different place to the traditional view of the museum, but in important respects it was often like 'going out where you came in'. There are two related points. First, Rifkin was arguing that the objects under consideration in the new art history remained those of the established story. These were the lionised sequence of museum objects. Secondly, the historical work that underpinned the new approach also served to undergird these conservative institutions and did not challenge the constitution of knowledge. Art historians might now speak of class, revolution, prostitution and other dimensions of the social world, but this work reaffirmed the traditional focus on the masterpiece, 'and the historicisation acts like a sort of immanent meaning of the art-work, as if the source – the real source, of its timeless values'.⁴⁷ Art dealers and museum directors could slumber untroubled.

45 Rifkin 1983a, p. 45.

46 Rifkin 1983, p. 36.

47 Rifkin 1983, p. 36. This argument was part of his running, if one-sided, disagreement with T.J. Clark, who sees canonical artworks as the source of anti-capitalist values. See Rifkin 1985a. This is his review of T.J. Clark's *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Clark 1985). One sided, because Clark did not respond. This was an approach pushed further by Rifkin's student Nick Green, both in essays explicitly criticising the writing of T.J. Clark and in his book *The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France*, which now reads, despite or because of

The theoretical stakes underpinning this argument emerge clearly in the short polemical essay 'Art's Histories', which was Rifkin's contribution to the collection *The New Art History*.⁴⁸ Explicitly, this short essay challenges the emergent common sense of the period as a form of business as usual. 'What objects should go in the museums? Should there be trolley-buses alongside the Monets, looms with the Courbets, images of workers confronting the culture of the middle class?'⁴⁹ All this to revise art history? The problem, he suggested, was that 'Marxist or social or sociological histories of art have been content to contest the interpretation of the valued series while refusing to put this structure of values under any serious threat'.⁵⁰ Rather, following Marx in chapter 1 of *Capital*, he suggested art history was a phenomenal form constituted from the long processes of academic specialisation, the rise of the market and so forth. In a radically historicising move, he argued for uncoupling the terms art and history. He continued:

For art has no meaning other than the sum of its historically specific ones; and a history of art that requires a unified field of meaning therefore implies that there is no history. It would seem unlikely, then, that a new art history that really takes up this issue can long remain a history of art. But if it does not take it up, then it cannot be new.⁵¹

Instead of 'an anxious liberal stratagem to market a faded product',⁵² Rifkin advocated the systematic derangement of his discipline. As he suggested in 'Can Gramsci Save Art History?', a Marxist art history only existed in tension with traditional or 'bourgeois' art history, its 'many institutions and staffs of intellectuals'. While there had been much discussion of 'contextualisation' and 'background', 'during the 1970s traditional art history has flourished as never before'.⁵³ A Marxist approach to art history did not simply entail introducing historical details of class and capital, but a practice on and against the institutions of knowledge. Gramsci would have to be mobilised for this project. This

the invocations of Foucault, like a work of classic social history of art, but with the pictures omitted. See Green & Mort; Green 1990.

48 Rees & Borzello 1986.

49 Rifkin 1986, p. 159.

50 Rifkin 1986, p. 161.

51 Rifkin 1986, p. 157.

52 Rifkin 1986, p. 158.

53 For criticisms of background and contextualisation see Rifkin 1986, p. 35; and Clark 1973, p. 12.

process of dispersal would re-emerge as a consideration of the uneven temporalities of art, history and language, but in 'Art's Histories' Rifkin began to speculate on the appropriate museum in which to place Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* of 1907: 'should it go in the museum of colonial oppression and liberation, the museum of gender formation, or the museum of social climbing?'⁵⁴ A thoroughgoing criticism of art history (and the museum) would entail an engagement with feminism and a demystification of the artist as a social type.⁵⁵ The study of popular form was seen as part of a much broader challenge to the discipline of art history that rejected a coherent conception of 'art'.

The argument, compelling as it is, is not trouble-free. Even from the perspective of the critique of art history, why should we not imagine a museum of aesthetic ideology? It is also now pretty evident that the disciple would come to terms with feminist criticism, ideology critique and the rest. Rifkin had not yet understood that this programme for the destruction of art history would not outlast the radical moment of the 1970s and that these themes could also be reincorporated into the academy as a watered-down programme in which every minor artist or 'popular' image practice could be set up as raw material for the PhD machine and the REF. A feeble version of the social history of art that attached Bourdieu's critique of taste to Foucault's historicism, feminism and canon critique was soon to become the 'normal science' of the discipline. Here theory and anti-elitism operate as the basis for disciplinary renewal that leaves the production apparatus untouched; art and its institutions could be subject to critique, but art history remained unscathed, expanding exponentially. The Marxist work of the 1970s was a vanishing mediator for this new common sense.⁵⁶

Many of these arguments in the radical art history of the period were drawn out in Rifkin's review of T.J. Clark's influential book *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers*, published as 'Marx' Clarkism'. If Rifkin has continued to pursue the approach outlined in this short essay, the tone in this piece was extremely acerbic, as is evident from its title and his reference throughout to Clark as 'C': I have included it in this collection to help the reader see the terrain as it appeared at the time and not to revive

54 Rifkin 1986, p. 159.

55 In passing, I want to note that Rifkin misrepresents Marcuse here simply as an advocate of art as 'category of liberty'. This is to lop off the other part of Marcuse's dialectic which has art as corraling values excluded from the dominant culture.

56 For thoughts on this transformation see: Orton 1985, pp. 28–35.

the bad feeling it generated.⁵⁷ 'Marx' Clarkism' reiterates the criticism of the social history of art for its uncritical dependence on the standard narrative of canonical 'masterpieces'. Here Rifkin develops a range of specific and general responses to Clark's book: the literature on the café concert underpinning Clark's account of the *A Bar at the Folies Bergère* (1882) dates from an earlier point and he misses the legal regulation of the entertainment industries; he uses English sources to explain the French middle class; he glides over the event of the Commune; the account of class and ideology does not evade Clark's own strictures on 'vulgar Marxism'; the reliance on Debord pulled history out of shape; he occludes his sources; and the presentation of *Olympia* (1863) as an absent signifier of class, misses the extent to which the painting's reception was framed by gendered responses (Clark, we are told, does not imagine women as viewers). Most of all, Rifkin suggests *The Painting of Modern Life* is a more conventional book than has often been supposed; readers focused on the volume's content rather than the form of the argument. Despite their shared criticism of history as 'background', historical material (the ground against which pictures shine so brightly) is, Rifkin argues, used by Clark to illuminate the great works of the avant-garde, whereas the responses to those artworks are subjective and aesthetic. Value judgements masquerade as historical explanations: the 'one spectacle of modern capitalism of which he refuses any criticism is the museum form of avant-garde art itself as a source of cultural value, or as the object of specialised attention, whether from the historian, the dealer, the critic, the collector or the politician'.⁵⁸ In a seemingly marginal point, Rifkin notes that Clark puts too much political emphasis on surveillance of cafes and censorship of popular song, because he is too intent on getting to the new social stratum and to Manet. Similarly, it is dubious to read 'Louis Veuillot's *Odeurs de Paris* (1867) as a literal or a symptomatic guide to attitudes towards the cafe-concert. After all, Veuillot was a journalist who made a living out of his nasty, right-wing, ultramontane mentality, and people must have bought his style as much for a good read as to take him entirely seriously'.⁵⁹ Rifkin's point is that getting away from a model of context or background requires attention to nuance in matters like this, just as much as it requires careful description of art.

Underpinning these criticisms is a rejection of the writing of cultural history based on judgements of taste. At this time, Rifkin seemed to think that cultural value could be dissolved into history and that semiotic criticism circumvented

57 I take it that the reference to 'C' was a retort to Clark's narrativ 'T'. 'C' is clearly an author function, but 'T' is no less of one.

58 Rifkin 1985a, p. 488.

59 Rifkin 1985a, p. 493.

this problem of background/foreground, which now seems quaint.⁶⁰ Rifkin's intellectual approach combined Bakhtin, with social history and structural linguistics, but it was a strength of Clark's work that he kept his distance from the semiotics based on De Saussure.⁶¹ In my view, Rifkin also underestimated Clark's then unfashionable Hegelian resources, his epistemological realism and the sheer power of his *ekphrasis*. Nevertheless, in its moment Rifkin's critique of the development of the new art history was a powerful argument that represented an antipode to the work of Clark. Much scholarship fell on the waste ground between their strong projects. Interestingly, both gradually abandoned their fortifications, with Rifkin realising he could not avoid aesthetic thought (or poetics), even as he began to work the categories of this intellectual mode over unexpected objects, such as gay porn.⁶² Clark, in contrast, began to set aside his strong attention to social history while retaining a focus on great works of art as placeholders for critical values. All the permutations in this field of arguments have precedents in Marxist debate and none are without their problems.⁶³

'Well Formed Phrases', which was 'written with the 1984–5 miners' strike in mind', continues the argument elaborated in the earlier Commune essays. This essay makes clear the extent to which Rifkin was reworking unorthodox French labour history for art history or cultural studies. Against the prevalent 'modernartandmodernism' of the social history of art (and probably the widely disseminated Open University course of that name) he invokes Bakhtin and the Warburg iconologists, but the key points of discussion are Le Play's Catholic moralisation of the working class and Denis Poulot's pathological account of worker culture in *Le Sublime*. It should be apparent that the work of Rancière and Alain Cottureau stand behind this essay. With Roger Thomas, Rifkin edited a key collection of these studies in the pioneering volume *Voices of the People: The Politics and Life of 'La Sociale' at the End of the Second Empire* (1988).⁶⁴ At this point, the only works by Rancière in English were his contribution to *Reading Capital*, his critique of the artisan in labour history, and his account of the problems in Althusser's theory of ideology.⁶⁵ Rifkin was a Rancièrian before this

60 Rifkin 1985a, p. 491.

61 See also Clark's exchange with Peter Wollen: Clark 1980a; Wollen 1980; Clark 1980b; see also Harrison, Baldwin and Ramsden 1981.

62 Rifkin 1995a; published in English as Rifkin 1995b.

63 For the distinct trajectories of Clark and Rifkin, see Rifkin 1985a.

64 Rifkin and Thomas 1988. For more on Le Play and Poulot, see also Ross 1988, pp. 15–17.

65 Rancière 1976. (It appeared in *Theoretical Practice* in three parts from 1973); Rancière 1974; Rancière 1983a.

became a matter of intellectual fashion; he gives an account of his engagement with Rancière in the short essay 'Il y a des mots qu'on souhaiterait ne plus lire', which offers an excellent picture of the emergence of a new materialist cultural history. In reading these studies it is, I think, important to view Rancière as a voice in the extension of socialist histories of work, rather than the philosopher of disagreement or the division of the sensible.

I do not intend in this introduction to go through the problems raised by Rancière's philosophy of equality as speech act – suffice it to say that 'Well Formed Phrases' draws on themes in this work to investigate a range of representations of the worker ranging from the image of labour as incarnation of peace and nationhood to the virulent and hysterical insistence that workers should remain in their place, figured through a series of violent fantasies: '... scrabbling together their imagery from an already well-worn stock of anecdotes, from a current bourgeois vocabulary of fears and hatreds'.⁶⁶ The fantasy of the 'good worker' is central here. This is a conception of the labouring masses that would be carried over in so much official communist historiography, fusing middle-class representation of the worker with some elements of socialist desire. This is how Henri Lefebvre described this ideological figure in 1962:

He is decent, fraternal, paternal, strict but kind, strong, serious, solemn, energetic but lenient, etc. he displays the virtues of a good father and a good citizen, raised to the level of a great people, a great nation and a great party. The new man, the so-called Communist man, has only one failing: he is a bore.⁶⁷

The 'he' is important. The good worker was the necessary antipode to the demonic Sublime (described by Poulot) who terrified the bourgeoisie. The good worker is sober, family-orientated, devoted to his trade and moderate in all things. In contrast, the Sublime is drunk, profligate, loose, wild and he could not give a damn about work. These oppositions shape the bourgeois imagination and they are still with us in contemporary mass media. However, in this criticism, Rifkin also takes aim at some traditional Marxist history/art history/literary criticism that misrecognises the celebration of labour as progressive: 'work is ideal compared to laziness or political radicalism, and the idealisation of work serves to make it desirable like the liberty you might

66 Rifkin 1985b, p. 21.

67 Lefebvre 1995, p. 85. Rifkin was *rapporteur* for Verso on two volumes of *The Critique of Everyday Life*. At one point he was also organising an exhibition around the themes raised by Lefebvre for the Design Museum, London.

desire'.⁶⁸ Rancière provided Rifkin with a way of 'twisting identitarian matters to a fluid and unexpected non-system of misrecognitions'.⁶⁹ Across the repertoire of images of labour, from heroisation to murderous fantasies of hate, there is a continuity – or at least a chain of contiguity – which implies workers must stick to their work and know their collective place. The scatological image of the worker was clearly a reactionary rationalisation of repression, but the projection of the good worker was no less operative and oppressive. As Raymond Williams suggested, 'there are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses'. The 'masses are other people'.⁷⁰

'Carmenology' completes this sequence of work with a study of Bizet's *Carmen* and the history of its reception from its first performance at the *Opéra-Comique* in Paris on 3 March 1875 to the time Rifkin wrote the essay. He cast this study as a venture onto 'the terrain of the truly banal' p. 85. In its way, the *Carmen* essay might be taken as a critique of the type of social history of art practised by Clark. Rather than symptomatic reading as method to discover the significant ruptures in ideology performed by important works of art, this essay treats meaning production as the generation of routine fragments of narrative-sense. Here repetition isn't a key to the (political) unconscious, but the mark of cultural re-iteration; the object of attention, in this case Bizet's popular opera, is seen to be assembled from second-hand codes and conventions, it is compiled from a series of circulating ideologemes or discursive series. There is no fixed meaning to be uncovered beneath the surface, only routine obsessions and historical stagings, bounded by conjunctural determinants. Compiled as it may be from 'cliches', 'stereotypes' and popular paintings of Spain, it cannot escape the gravitational pull of the Commune event and it accrues layered interpretations that weigh it down (Wagnerism, Nietzsche, Adorno, Godard). First performed at a time when any intimation of sexual freedom suggests the disturbance of the Commune, it gathers this history to itself. A banal work like *Carmen* is just as much the product of overdetermination as Manet's avant-garde pyrotechnics. Having worked through a critique of art history and officially sanctioned museum art, Rifkin became a connoisseur of the popular. His book *Street Noises: Parisian Pleasure 1900–40* pursues this fascination, exploring the fabrication of the urban-popular imagination in the 'sight-plans and sound-plans of the city',⁷¹ through a creative use of Benjamin. Rifkin ranges

68 Rifkin 1985b, p. 26.

69 Rifkin 2005b, p. 99.

70 Williams 1979, p. 289.

71 Rifkin 1993, p. 88.

over French song, film and crime magazines such as *Détective*.⁷² The popular is traced as the central instance of modernity from the condensed biographies of those 'authentic' representatives of the working-class quarters, Maurice Chevalier and Edith Piaf; to tales of small-time crooks and their loves (gay and straight); comments from the vice squad; and the polymorphous desires for sailors and Legionnaires as they appear in popular forms. Meanwhile the 'snapshot' emerges as 'a paradigm for the illusion of disinterest that is a prevailing condition of urban subjectivity, of seeing and hearing each event and sound as a confirmation of your relation to the city'.⁷³ Throughout this densely-layered book sexual desire appears with a distinct class colouration.

Rejecting any simple dichotomy of high and low culture (despite a predilection for Adorno), Rifkin could present a popular opera as just as semantically dense and polysemic as any Beethoven sonata or painting by Manet. Bizet, he tells us, was 'no dandy, no ironist, no Manet at all, and he aimed to succeed with his operas'.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, cultural production entails assembling and reworking materials that circulate through a culture. Cultural form is a kind of social condensation. Here we can just say that *Carmen* figures as the displaced presence of the Commune. As he notes, the Commune was not really done with until the end of the trials and the repeal of Martial Law in 1875. He suggests:

the ambivalent meanings of *bohème* which circulated around the '*fille de bohème*' that was *Carmen*, and the memory of the café as the 'laboratory of revolution', overlapped with the actual surveillance of daily life, its inspection for every and any kind of social and political infraction. The very sight of a disorderly café, Lillas Pastia's fictional dive on the set of *Carmen*, was liable to conjugate with other languages than those of musical analysis.⁷⁵

The over-determined histories and signs of 'a woman of the people' set in train fantasies and wish images that continue all the way, Rifkin suggests, to 'Peter Brook's stripped down images of woman as earth, earth as fate, and of woman as her own death-wish', or Godard's *Prénom Carmen*. Tracing the *longue durée* of signs or narrative fragments would become something of a stock in trade for Rifkin. That is to say, these essays begin to work through differential

⁷² Rifkin 1993, as well as the series of broadcasts for BBC Radio 3: Rifkin 1989.

⁷³ Rifkin 1993, p. 88.

⁷⁴ Rifkin 1998a, p. 103.

⁷⁵ Rifkin 1998a, p. 96.

temporalities, or distinct 'levels', of a social formation. Rifkin's work on the Commune was a product of the Althusserian moment, even though he kept his distance from codified Althusserianism (the critique of Marxist 'science' as presented in Rancière's *La Leçon d'Althusser* provided his inoculation.)⁷⁶

Different Times of Art

If the Commune essays explore differential narratives of art, class and industry as overlapping forms, Rifkin's studies of the languages of art in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries push this approach in significantly new directions. These are among the richest accounts of art written in recent times, but they are also some of the most difficult. Nevertheless, these studies reverberate with important recent work on temporality in Marxist theory. Three important essays in this mode are included in this collection: 'History, Time and the Morphology of Critical Language, or Publicola's Choice' (1994); 'The Words "Art", the Artist's Status: Technique and Affectivity in France, 1789–98' (1993); and 'Ingres and the Academic Dictionary' (1983). 'Success Disavowed: The Schools of Design in Mid-Nineteenth Century Britain. (An Allegory)', can also be situated in this cluster.

Temporal contradiction – differential, uneven or overlapping time – is often seen to emerge as a topic for Marxism with *Reading Capital* and Althusser's injunction against writing history in the 'future anterior'.⁷⁷ Any actual social formation, we are told, is comprised of the elements of distinct modes of production. However, there is a more extensive strand of thought on uneven time – we could call it a 'subterranean current' in Marxism – emerging with Marx and running through to the present. This stream appears strongly in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and the 1857 'Introduction' to the *Grundrisse* (two texts that have always been central to teaching the MA in Social History of Art at the University of Leeds, where Rifkin was Professor); it is also present in the gothic figuration of *Capital* (a past that refused to die); or even in the circulation times presented in Volume II. It certainly becomes stronger from the point at which Marx and Engels began to reconsider the supposedly progressive aspects of colonialism⁷⁸ – an intellectual revaluation usually dated from the 1860s. For Kevin Anderson the impetus came from the American Civil War; for José

⁷⁶ Rancière 2011.

⁷⁷ Althusser & Balibar 1979; Althusser 1979, p. 54.

⁷⁸ For a good account of this turnabout, see Anderson 2010.

Aricó it was the study of colonialism in Ireland that led him to reconsider; and according to Teodor Shanin it was the exchanges with Zasulich and others over the Russian Mir.⁷⁹ These are important studies, but I doubt we need a single instance as cause. The point is to recognise that from this time Marx shifts position on colonialism and highlighted the role of the world market. As an example, he begins to ponder slavery in the Southern States as a form of capitalism. In this instance, it does not concern us whether he was right or wrong – that is another big debate – but rather that he began to conceive the possibility of forms of modern society and capitalism that did not follow some predetermined and progressive path.⁸⁰ In a famous letter from 1877, Marx criticised those intent on transforming

my historical sketch of the genesis in Western Europe into a historico-philosophic theory of the general path of development, imposed by fate to all peoples, whatever the historical circumstances in which they are placed, in order to eventually attain this economic formation which, with a tremendous leap of the productive forces of social labour, assures the most integral development of every individual producer ... Thus events strikingly analogous, but occurring in different historical milieu, led to quite disparate results. By studying each of these evolutions on its own, and then comparing them, one can easily discover the key to the phenomenon, but it will never be arrived at by employing the all-purpose formula of a general historico-philosophical theory whose supreme virtue is being supra-historical.⁸¹

If this passage is well known, the point has not always been followed through. Historical Materialism is not a philosophy of history. This conception of uneven time was not simply a feature of the 'late Marx'; it is there at the outset and applied to most 'advanced' centres of capital accumulation. For instance, Engels observed that the English state-form was 'up to the neck in the Middle Ages'.⁸² This stream runs through Trotsky's important account of uneven and combined development, Benjamin's 'dialectical image' and 'Theses on the

79 Anderson 2010; Aricó 2014; Shanin 1983.

80 Marx's views differed from text to text, but as an example: 'The fact that we now not only call the plantation owners in America capitalists, but that they are capitalists is based on their existence as anomalies within a world market based on free labour'. Marx 1973, p. 513.

81 Marx 1989c, pp. 200–1.

82 Engels 1975, pp. 370–1.

Philosophy of History', Bloch's non-synchronous dialectics, Lefebvre's work on everyday life and the accounts of the aleatory in *Introduction to Modernity* and the later Althusser.⁸³ It surfaces, in a distinct intellectual tradition, in Raymond Williams's thoughts on 'dominant, residual and emergent' and E.P. Thompson on rescuing the past from the 'enormous condescension of posterity'.⁸⁴ It has been central to Marxist debates on colonised societies and 'peripheral capitalism' – here we could mention José Carlos Marátgui and Roberto Schwartz.⁸⁵ It is current in the more recent work by, among others, Daniel Bensaïd, Michael Löwy and Massimiliano Tomba.⁸⁶ This body of work shares a rejection of unilinear development, reductionist base-and-superstructure models and smooth totalities; foregrounding unevenness, contradiction, fragmentation, disjuncture and delay (anachronism, historical lags, remnants, survivals and hangovers).

As Tomba put it: 'The European episodes are not universally valid; the archaic, being contemporary, is not condemned to die, but can be combined with the temporality of capitalist modernity, in order to put a brake on its destructive outcomes or to accelerate its tendencies, but in order to think its deviation from the line'.⁸⁷ The point is important, but Dipesh Chakrabarty is undoubtedly correct that the formulations and language in much of this debate continue to presume a normative conception of development based on Western societies – with the majority world positioned as survival, remnant or residue of an earlier time.⁸⁸ Perhaps the problem is rooted in the metaphor of time itself, which seems to invite descriptions such as 'advanced' and 'backward'. It is difficult for material beings not to see time as passing. The word 'development' is similarly troublesome. If we are to make use of Trotsky's uneven and combined development, it will have to be reconstructed through engagement with recent Marxist work on temporality and the current mode of production debates.⁸⁹ However, the problem at stake is how to consider social and cultural forms that emerge in one set of circumstances, yet persist and

83 Trotsky 1962; Benjamin 1983; Benjamin 2003; Bloch 1991; Lefebvre 1991; Lefebvre 1995; Althusser 2006.

84 Williams 1977, pp. 121–7; Thompson 1980, p. 12.

85 Marátgui 2011; Schwartz 1992.

86 Bensaïd 2002; Löwy 2005; Tomba 2013. We could also add to this list Derrida on *contratemp*s and the work of Peter Osborne on modernity as consciousness of time: Derrida 1994; Osborne 1995.

87 Tomba 2013, p. 177.

88 Chakrabarty, pp. 29–30.

89 Edwards 2015; Day & Edwards forthcoming.

recombine with others under subsequent conditions. This is fundamentally a question of totalisation and singularity.

At least from the point of E.P. Thompson's 'Peculiarities of the English' there has been a strong non-historicist way of conceiving modes of production. Rejecting the story of 'other countries' that took the French Revolution as the model of bourgeois revolution, Thompson examined a specific national road to capitalism. Some Marxist historians, basing themselves on Thompson's argument, have simply flipped the polarities and taken agrarian capitalism in the English southern counties to be the model for the emergence of capitalism. Any society that does not measure up is seen as pre-capitalist on this reckoning.⁹⁰ However, others have returned to Marx to reconsider what constitutes capitalist laws of motion and the diverse patterns of their emergence. For example, Jairus Banaji argues that 'the history of capitalism comprises a series of *configurations* of capital'.⁹¹ Banaji proceeds in his collection of exemplary essays to illustrate some 'accumulation trajectories' ranging from late antiquity and the large Byzantine estates through to the Deccan peasantry in nineteenth-century India. Problems remain, but a mode-of-production analysis does not require ideas of smooth, unilinear change, and does not involve consigning great swaths of the current world to the cultural past. Tomba again: 'Capital, due to its indifference to different cultural horizons and social or familial structures, is able to functionalise different temporalities to the rhythm of socially-necessary labour. It can graft capitalist exploitation onto the trunk of servile relations not regulated by European laws, or utilise pre-existing social hierarchies in order to secure command and control over labour'.⁹² These diverse forms of labour exploitation must exist contemporaneously; they are all modern.

There is no natural course for capitalist development, and no exemplary perspective, be it France or England, from which to view the other configurations. As Jameson put it 'although in abstraction there exists an inescapable and irreversible dynamic of the development of capitalism as such – there is no "basic" historical paradigm, all the paths of capitalist development are unique and unrepeatable'.⁹³ We are faced with the problem of uneven and combined simultaneity. Whether we call this, with Tomba, the 'violent synchronisation of the different temporalities' or, with Bensaïd, the 'asynchrony' of a 'discordance

90 Aston and Philpin 1985; but particularly those who have followed in Brenner's wake: Wood 1991; Wood 2002; Connell 1987.

91 Banaji 2010, p. 11.

92 Tomba 2012, p. xiv.

93 Jameson 2002, p. 182.

of temporalities', the point is the same.⁹⁴ As capital takes hold of existing forms of social organisation, the combination generates singular instances or 'concrete particulars'.⁹⁵ If this conception of uneven time enables us to understand the world scale, it also allows for a more dissonant comprehension of particular social formations.

Rifkin's contribution to this underground current, which ought to be known much more widely, began in the early 80s and drew on Marx, Benjamin and Lefebvre to reconceptualise French art production immediately before and after the revolution of 1789. In these studies he theorised uneven temporality as a poetics of history, akin to what Daniel Bensaïd would call 'a new temporality of knowledge'.⁹⁶ Despite his explicit references, Rifkin's approach is probably best compared to the late Althusser, where an aleatory configuration of elements cohere in a social formation: 'Every mode of production comprises *elements that are independent of each other*, each resulting from its own specific history, in the absence of any organic, teleological relation between these diverse histories'.⁹⁷ If we were to try to pin him down, Rifkin might be called an aleatory cultural materialist. This approach risks abandoning, or downgrading, the critique of political economy; capital and class tend to disappear as the objective structures around which *récits* circulate. Rifkin partly avoids the problem, because work and industry constitute a centre, in these essays, around which the diverse strands of the social fabric turn. It is worth noting how little of New Left art history has addressed labour and class, rather the main plank of this work has involved an engagement with commodity critique; commodities are foregrounded while occluding the one – labour power – that makes all the others possible.⁹⁸ Rifkin's essays in the 80s and 90s developed a highly invent-

94 Tomba 2013, p. 161; Bensaïd 2002, p. 4.

95 A Marxist understanding has to grasp the particular configurations. At the same time, Marxism is able to avoid what Bensaïd calls the 'insane chaos of absolute singularities' (Bensaïd 2002, p. 61). Of importance here is Basso 2012. As Trotsky understood, it is the world market that synchronises these divergent points of development, because the presence of powerful capitalist economies in the world market – through military competition or colonisation – force the pace for the others. Such a conception allows us to maintain a sense of historical particularity, while not abandoning the idea of differential power or merely parallel stories. Trotsky 1962. Tomba has 'socially necessary labour' perform the work of synchronisation. See Karl Marx on England as the 'metropolis of capital', in Marx & Engels 1975, p. 87. As Bensaïd puts it: 'Politics is precisely the point where these discordant times intersect' (Bensaïd 2002, p. 2).

96 Bensaïd 2002, p. 27.

97 Althusser 2006, p. 199.

98 For examples of studies that engage centrally with class see: Clark 1973 and (for the petty

ive attention to work, industry and class. It is this cluster of concerns that made his work a distinctive intervention into the debate.

'Ingres and the Academic Dictionary' is the first of Rifkin's essays to tackle the braiding of multiple stands of history, but the central issue is probably best grasped via the later text 'Publicola's Choice'. This essay asks what happens if you take seriously art writing as a form or practice. The social history of art typically treats criticism as 'a specially privileged access to art's production of meanings'.⁹⁹ Given that salvaging the first audience's response to an artwork is exceptionally difficult and frequently impossible, the critic's voice is regularly taken as a starting point for this reconstruction of reception. In the best art history, criticism is not thought to be transparent or neutral. Rather, strategies of reading are required to cut through the fog of ideology: fixing on iteration, lapsus, absence and hysterical reaction as symptoms, historians try to get through or around the critic's prose to the artwork. This has been Clark's method and perhaps his single most important contribution. Rifkin takes a different tack, treating the standard languages of art as practices of writing with their own traditions and determinations; he suggests art writing 'is the sum of a series of contingencies between which there is no essential isomorphism'.¹⁰⁰ As with his earlier studies of the Commune and censorship, the press is here treated as a material practice. An art scandal, like other scandals, could fill column inches and sell papers. What is more, these disjunctive, but overlapping languages of art can provide spaces from which art gets made. Rifkin does not comment on the avant-garde in this essay, but the example is obvious. His actual instances are drawn from the Academic writing of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, principally the salons of the revolutionary period. Gérard's and Neveu's opinions on nature provide one case; he suggests it is tempting to see the former as representing a Cartesian perspective and the latter an 'alternative, empiricist mainstream' (out of Locke and Condillac). Tempting, because it makes them seem more interesting, but unlikely: 'What they have both got hold of is some bits of discourse that is casual, banal, quotidian'.¹⁰¹ Meaning is delimited by this conventional writing, but it is what we have to reckon with. There is much to think about in this essay, for instance there are compelling reflections on the collision of art as a sign for the timeless as it crosses 'history' in history painting. This approach sees criticism as a 'form

bourgeoisie) Clark 1985; other significant studies include: Solkin 1982; Barrel 1980 and 1992; and Nesbit 1992.

99 Rifkin 1994, p. 29.

100 Rifkin 1994, p. 29.

101 Rifkin 1994, p. 29.

of discourse' that is 'distinct from history and art', but which 'mediates between them' in complex and often aleatory ways. In this essay, and the others in this part, fragments of official discourse come into constellations, producing singular instances of art and artistic ideology. 'Ingres and the Academic Dictionary: An Essay on Ideology and Stupefaction in the Social Formation of the "Artist"', which appeared in 1983, is one of Rifkin's most influential essays that looks at the relation of J.A.D. Ingres – 'a wordy artist' – and 'some of his biographers'.¹⁰² Principally, the object of study is the extensive series of notes Ingres made in his *Cahiers* and how these cross Academic discourse and return in the work of those who imposed a form on his life.¹⁰³ That is to say, this essay very much contests the 'imaginary coherence' of Academic discourse. Reading Althusser, Macherey and Barthes this questioning of assumed continuity and coherence was very much the sense of the advanced art historian of the time. For Rifkin, 1789 represented a 'wound' in Academic theory:

Writing of Ingres, they [biographers who speak the language of the Academy] do not deny his modernity, rather they assert it as a specific confirmation of the continuous and transcendent quality of the tradition within whose parameters they hold it to exist.¹⁰⁴

'Unity', 'continuity' and 'solidity' have to be managed across the moment of rupture. One way this coherence could be achieved was to present any deviation from academic norms as a matter of 'individual character'.¹⁰⁵ So a 'bundle of inconsequentialities' was transformed into 'a fictional *monsieur*', in the process these banalities might be repackaged as the 'single germ of true originality'.¹⁰⁶ In so doing, the rupture reappeared in displaced form.

102 The theme of biography and stupefaction is in dialogue with Griselda Pollock's important essay: Pollock 1980.

103 For a distinct, but congruent, account of Ingres's 'post-narrative painting', see Siegfried 2009. Siegfried's exceptionally well-researched study also focuses on fragmentation, disjunction and Ingres's inclination to put 'very different things together' (p. 24). In her account the pictures that emerge are fraught with psychic tension and 'emotional charge' in ways that open onto the historical-sexual imaginary. Her book is everything that Rifkin's work is not: painstakingly researched, studious, detailed and attentive to the artwork. In some ways, it is an antidote to his writing, so it is fascinating to watch the emergence of a compatible vision of Ingres and late academic practice.

104 Rifkin 1983b, p. 154.

105 Rifkin 1983b, p. 155.

106 Rifkin 1983b, p. 155.

Rifkin suggests in this essay that he was 'not proposing a general theory on the incoherence of human experience'.¹⁰⁷ He protests too much; the essay along with much of the cultural theory of the period raised incoherence to ontology. But if this conception of subjectivity is problematic, he did not succumb to the fantasmatic project of 'political modernism' in *Tel Quel* or *Screen*, where subject/text were laminated and, thus, a disturbance in diegesis could be misconceived as a remodelling of the Subject.¹⁰⁸ Rifkin's conception is closer at this point to the critique of aesthetic ideology.¹⁰⁹ In this light, the claim that Ingres's painting *Oedipe* could 'reconcile and unite', which was advanced by the mid-nineteenth-century theorist of art and industry, Henri Delaborde, is typically ideological.¹¹⁰ Here the class dynamic underpinning these studies is explicit. Rifkin writes:

In the disordered system of this society ... there are some problems that help us to see why the longed-for unity of Ingres' works and words is really made up of so many styles and so many voices. For while, as we have suggested, his potential market was a nascent free market of a bourgeois commodity type, none the less many of the individuals who made up that market came not from the bourgeoisie, but from some remnants of the old aristocracy, the new Imperial aristocracy of Napoleon's court and state services, as well as from related Italian upper classes, tourists from the upper echelons of English and other European societies, etc. – the whole traversed by the political crisis of Empire and Restoration. It is just in the flux of such a market that the significance of style, period reference and story line in art becomes unfixed, acquiring a different weight and importance now for one grouping, now for another.¹¹¹

The 'upper echelons of English' society is imprecise, but that aside this is a remarkable example of how a conception of over-determined temporal contradiction allows Marxists to think about bourgeois revolution and transition in a manner that avoids the rigid formalism of political Marxism or accounts that

107 Rifkin 1983b, p. 156.

108 Rodowick 1994; Edwards 2012.

109 There is a distinct overlap between second-wave political modernism and criticisms of the ideology of the aesthetic. Both address the imaginary coherence of text or image, but the latter focuses on cognitive critique and not a textual reformation of the Subject. See: Orton 1994; De Man 1989; De Man 1996; Eagleton 1990.

110 Rifkin 1983b, p. 157.

111 Rifkin 1983b, p. 159.

put too much weight on the agency of the bourgeoisie.¹¹² What made Ingres 'such an ideal champion of the Academic Discourse', was his ability to present himself as academically orthodox, while pursuing his own choice of subjects and thus a particularly modern conception of artistic freedom.¹¹³ If the Academic Dictionary of the French language is commonly seen as the deletion of class conflict from the national frame, Rifkin argues that the Academic *Dictionnaire des Beaux Arts* provided the grammar for Ingres's choices. Ingres's notation process, we are told, is akin to this form, jotting down topics and subjects, commenting on his notes in a 'cross between a phatic gesture and a performative utterance'.¹¹⁴ Ingres's notebooks straddle the space between a 'displaced discourse and the modern world', and it is this 'near complete stupefaction' that endowed 'an old, aristocratic ideology with a new and central importance in bourgeois society'.¹¹⁵ This phasing of old and new, continuity and discontinuity provides a significant way to think about art in bourgeois society, but also the ideologies of the *ancien régime* as they take their place in the capitalist world. This was after all, in 1808, a world in which 'the spinning works of François Richard and Lenoir-Dufrense employs 750 workers in a former convent on Rue de Charonne. The power for its machines was supplied by horses, and most of the workers employed were children'.¹¹⁶ It is contradictions of this type that appear throughout Rifkin's figuring of Academic art, offering a kind of uneven and combined account of ideology. For instance, Rifkin suggests it is the 'a-temporality of art that makes it art'.¹¹⁷ 'Art in its time' has been a standard reference in the new art history, but 'art out of its time' is probably much more significant. Working out of art history, Rifkin gives us one of the key contributions to thinking about the French revolution and the emergence of capitalism. This is not the *ancien régime* of Meyer and Anderson,¹¹⁸ neither is it the formalism of the Brenner school or the subjectivism of the English Communist historians. Rifkin suggests instead that existing forms are reconfigured in the context of modern capitalism. In any case, the structured heterogeneity evident in this essay suggests an open-ended history. Given

112 While he would disagree with my theoretical emphasis, my conclusion is close to the position outlined in Neil Davidson's outstanding account of the debates on bourgeois revolution and the transition to capitalism: see Davidson 2012; also: Heller 2011.

113 Rifkin 1983b, p. 160.

114 Rifkin 1983b, p. 164.

115 Rifkin 1983b, p. 166.

116 Hazan, p. 123.

117 Rifkin 1983b, p. 168.

118 Meyer 2010; Anderson 1992.

Rifkin's interest in music perhaps we should follow Bloch and describe this pattern as the 'polyphony of a unity'.¹¹⁹

'The Words "Art", the Artist's Status: Technique and Affectivity in France, 1789–98' is also an exceptionally rich essay that examines ideological discontinuities between the artistic production of the *ancien régime* and 'the political and cultural economy of the 1840s and 50s'. I do not intend to offer a detailed presentation. Principally, Rifkin's essay considers the interlacing of 'notions of genre and artistic skill' as they are tracked through the legacy of the neo-classical painter Jacques-Louis David.¹²⁰ Here the orders of nature and strict classical virtue have to be configured as models for industrial design and production. In a striking example, Rifkin notes that Jean Baptiste Joseph Wicar, David's austere, revolutionary student, demanded the guillotine for painters of landscape or genre scenes, that is for any artist who departed from strict Academic history painting as a marker for public virtue.¹²¹ In contrast, for Henri Delaborde, writing at a later moment, 'revolutionary spirit' always 'kills poetry before it kills the poet'.¹²² The problem was how to manage the posthumous reputation of David in a way that might valorise his art, whilst distancing his involvement in revolutionary events as a regicide and pageant master. Unravelling this problem involves Rifkin in reflections on art, nature and design; on hierarchies and genres, on social interest and disinterestedness in aesthetics and affect. In all of this David emerges as a sign for dispersal across the multiple spaces of ideology.

This double formulation of function and taste articulates precisely the slippages between general and particular functions of art, between taste and feeling, social form and utility ... And its problems, because they are irresolvable in the abstract, will continue to plague the practice of specialised art teaching throughout the first decades of the Polytechnique.¹²³

This slippage comes to play, Rifkin argues, as a constitutive role in the fraught relation of art and industry. It is worth noting that this slippage plays a central role in Rifkin's conception of modernity – a point to which I will return. Rifkin pursues this set of questions in 'Success Disavowed: The Schools of Design in Mid-Nineteenth Century Britain. (An Allegory)', which was first published in

119 Cited in Tomba 2013, p. xiii.

120 Rifkin 1991, p. 73.

121 Rifkin 1991, p. 73.

122 Rifkin 1991, p. 74.

123 Rifkin 1991, p. 79.

Les Révoltes logiques. In this remarkable study of British art and design education in nineteenth-century Britain, he looks at the way middle-class conceptions of art and industry repeatedly unravelled. The same point also appears in 'Ingres and the Academic Dictionary'.¹²⁴ Then as now (the allegory) manufacturers and politicians argued for an art education geared to the needs of economy or industry, but they always fail to coincide. The discourse is as fantastic now as it was then. The art education put in place for artisans during the nineteenth century was meant to improve design and enable British industry to compete with the French luxury trades. Artisans were to be taught good taste and the basis for decorative design. However, this training was intentionally limited, denying artisans access to the kind of study (figure drawing) that would have allowed them to produce 'Art': they were to stay in their place. Try as the pedagogues of order might, these plans were subverted – middle-class women filled up the classes and artisans insisted on drawing the nude. The coupling of art and industry, against the explicit intentions of the gentlemen, generated utopian fragments. The long footnote on the idea of 'bourgeois utopia' in itself rewards study.

Lefebvre had asked, '[c]ould the introduction of the aleatory on a massive scale in all arenas of consciousness, knowledge and action be an essential characteristic of modernity?'¹²⁵ He clearly thought it could and that the 'dialectic of chance and necessity' defined this condition. In these highly suggestive essays Rifkin presents an account of the overlapping and collision of historical and poetic forms and fragments that provides the basis for another account of modernity. It is a characteristic aspect of his work that modernity is not where one might expect to find it.

Palimpsests of Modernity

Over and over, Rifkin rejected the synthesis on modernity that became the common sense of cultural theory and history. The standard account, and it now seems difficult to remember how late it came into focus, welded Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire* with Benjamin's account of Parisian commodity culture and consumption. In this synthesis, Haussmann's remodelling of Paris, urban shock, the grand boulevards, arcades and department stores, the prostitute as allegorical figure, the newspaper as form – these became the defining features

¹²⁴ Rifkin 1983b, p. 158.

¹²⁵ Lefebvre 1995, p. 204.

of the modern, and Baudelaire its immanent critic. In art history, Baudelaire's essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' emerged as a canonical text, with its attention to fashion, the heroism of bourgeois life and the couplet eternal/ephemeral.¹²⁶ T.J. Clark and others detached the analysis from Baudelaire's subject – the newspaper-illustrator Constantin Guys – and reattached it to the work of Manet and the Impressionists. Of course, Clark reworked his materials and his account has been largely bowdlerised – his readers seem not to get the central point about the petty bourgeoisie as 'shifter'.¹²⁷ What emerged as the common sense of a discipline was an idea of the modern revolving around commodification of consciousness, with modern artists as the analysts and commentators on this process. It is a remarkably Kantian formula. As Rifkin noted, 'certain commonly accepted signifiers of the modern, such as the painter "Manet", or the poet "Baudelaire" or theorist "Benjamin" get quite literally overcrowded. They become the narrowly-bounded proving-ground for versions or processes of which they themselves are but one, differential sign'.¹²⁸ Arguably, this predominant account was cemented with works such as Marshall Berman's *All that is Solid Melts into Air* (with Perry Anderson's retort), Franco Moretti's *Signs Taken for Wonders* and Susan Buck-Morss's study of the *Passagenwerk* in *Dialectics of Seeing*.¹²⁹ Debord and Baudrillard were then spread over the whole to give us a version of the nineteenth century as 'a critical romance of the commodity fetish'.¹³⁰ In many ways, this synthesised account of the modernism and modernity dialectic only really came into focus with those works that sought to take their leave from this cluster of problems: Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* and David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity*.¹³¹ Important work was done in unpacking the gendering of this view of modernism by Griselda Pollock and Tamar Garb, and Molly Nesbit wrote a brilliant study of its working-class underside in *Atget's Seven Albums*.¹³² The debate on post-colonialism has added further critical valances. However, much of this congealed account of modernity has subsequently been de-Marxified via the work of Foucault and the New Historicists, but the essential pattern still provides the backbone for

126 Baudelaire 1964, p. 13.

127 Though Rifkin did note the point. See: Rifkin 1985a.

128 Rifkin 1992, p. 71; see also: Rifkin 2000, p. 20.

129 Berman 1982; Anderson 1984; Moretti 1988; Buck-Morss 1989.

130 Debord 1994; Baudrillard 1970 and 1983. Rifkin 2000, p. 23.

131 Jameson 1991; Harvey 1990. This is a point I owe to Gail Day.

132 Pollock 1988; Garb 1993, Nesbit 1992.

thinking about European modernity and modernism as doxa. This sedimented account makes for an easily teachable seminar.

Rifkin took a position askance to this account of modernity. Even though Benjamin's work on Paris has provided a touchstone for him, he has repeatedly attempted to cut through this model. There are several linked dimensions to his criticism. First, he rejected the tradition of the social fantastic or urban marvellous as it ran from Baudelaire through Surrealism and Benjamin, seeking an alternative route via E.T.A. Hoffmann and Freud. The mark of Lefebvre can be felt here – the banal and the quotidian are taken as the locus of modern experience. He cites 'Lefebvre's virulent criticism of what he calls the "attack on the everyday" in Baudelaire and Surrealism, their desire always to stand on the far side of everydayness'.¹³³ If we can speak of modernity, its impact has to be felt throughout a culture and not be confined to some special instances, even if it is conceived as symptom. Benjamin's symbolist heritage drew him to the urban marvellous, but there are other forms of attention in his thinking. Rifkin fixed on Benjamin's interest in popular forms as condensations for anti-capitalist feeling.

Rifkin works the theoretical perspectives of Benjamin and Adorno over different objects, drawing out important thematics, while transforming their judgements and mores. The essays in question reject Adorno's distinction between 'art' and 'culture', an 'integral field of intellectual endeavour and an anthropological field of the routines of the industry, of its domination and subordination'. Adorno provides an exemplary mode of attention, but Rifkin suggests that if Adorno is right about the modernist art work, 'then it cannot achieve its autonomy through the revelation of the fact that the only form of progress is to break the illusory unity of subject and object, without also revealing that this is a condition of modern society that must be manifest in other processes than those of the production of art'.¹³⁴ Adorno thus isolates the art object and prevents its force from coming into play in culture. In contrast to this view, Rifkin suggests, the artwork must be an index of the social, and this is what Benjamin's philology underlines. To highlight these complexities he proceeds in 'Down on the Upbeat' to find in a police report on obscenity in popular entertainment a density of meaning of the sort that appears in Adorno's reading of atonal music.¹³⁵ In a similar process he asks why Benjamin

133 Rifkin 1992, p. 71. Rifkin 2000, p. 125 for Lefebvre's criticism of 'the "cloudy realm of the marvellous"' in Baudelaire and Surrealism. 'In the long run ...' is an acute and perceptive essay, but Rifkin was hedging his bets on the modern/postmodern debate. He lost.

134 Rifkin 1989b, p. 46.

135 Rifkin 1989b, p. 46.

ignores Zola. Benjamin, he suggests, needed to locate his modernity at an earlier point, 'when capitalism could still dream its future utopia'. Zola was closer to the 'marxist reading of the commodity as fantasmagoria'.¹³⁶ However, Benjamin's determination to fix Baudelaire as the poet of modernity meant the 'dialectical image begins to look more like an ellipsis than a trace, radically overdetermined rather than revealing'.¹³⁷ He writes:

In Benjamin's or Adorno's terms redemption is impossible ... Zola's utopia needs neither apocalypse nor art. It allows nothing for them as a projection of human needs. Instead romantic narrative itself, the authentic literary commodity of the nineteenth century, becomes utopic.¹³⁸

This is to hold on to the cluster of problems associated with Marxist aesthetics as commodity critique, but to reverse the terms. Following Lefebvre, Rifkin suggests that resistance to consumer culture does not require a privileged space called art. In the essay 'Freud's Rome, Benjamin's Paris: Whose London?', he again interrogates this Benjaminian emplotment of 'the capital of modernity' through a consideration of the cinematic figurations of the British capital as theoretical absence (or 'lack', given that Lacan occupies a central place).¹³⁹ We are given a further view onto these matters through Wagner in 'Beyreuth: World City'.¹⁴⁰

In a recent book on Paris, Eric Hazan notes that there is no mention of the arcades in Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*, 'nor in Nerval, nor in Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens* or his prose poems ... nor in *Les Misérables* or Eugène Sue's *Mysteries of Paris*'.¹⁴¹ Here literature appears as evidence rather than symptom, but it is a characteristic of the modern in Rifkin's writing that it appears elsewhere. In *Ingres Then, And Now*, he iconoclastically positions Ingres as a symptomatic artist of the Parisian arcades, finding in his paintings 'something of the shop window'.¹⁴² Once this has been said, it is plain, obvious. But saying it required finding modernity, mischievously, where one might not have

¹³⁶ Rifkin 1996, p. 106.

¹³⁷ Rifkin, p. 105.

¹³⁸ Rifkin, p. 108.

¹³⁹ Rifkin 1999a.

¹⁴⁰ Rifkin 2011.

¹⁴¹ Hazan 2010, p. 40.

¹⁴² Rifkin 2000, p. 43. In some ways, and Hazan gets this, the café, food and bookshops are more important in his history of Paris than the Opera.

thought it possible: in the arch-reactionary Ingres.¹⁴³ Widely recognised, but rarely prized, Ingres is a figure between or beside the Academic Ideal and modernity; a figure in which the one becomes the other. Ingres is located on either side of the wound inflicted by the French Revolution. In this manner, Rifkin argues there is a homology between the Phidian ideal and 'consumer choice, or the eye's choices in the increasingly dense visuality of the modern city'.¹⁴⁴ He suggests that it is here – in art produced and trapped in the meshes of commerce – that we should seek 'the phantasmic imagery of the interaction between the eternal and the ephemeral, rather than in the detached and disembodied gaze of the *flâneur*. Baudelaire's mistake was to project his eternal/ephemeral couplet onto Guys – an artist who "met his needs without challenging his aesthetic"'.¹⁴⁵ It should be apparent that this is an amplification of the argument in 'Ingres and the Academic Dictionary'. Modernity is precisely the overdetermined layering of temporalities – eternal and ephemeral – and in putting together an Academic ideal forged in the *ancien régime* to work in the post-revolutionary world of bourgeois commerce, Ingres is its embodiment, or symptom. His *Jeanne d'Arc* – 'with its deathly surface, its reactionary and monolithic nationalism, its maudlin politics' – seems 'less weighty than a single asparagus spear chosen from Manet's oeuvre', but via Carné's film *Les Enfants du Paradis*, it is presented as a palimpsest of the modern.

The second point would be to say that Rifkin's conception of modernity is, by definition, multi-dimensional and multi-temporal. In 'Carmenology' he suggests of the final act of the opera:

Each phrase is bracketed, or sandwiched, by its opposite: melody by gesture, violence by soothing, attraction by repulsion. The central image of the cards of fortune telling, the layering of chance on chance, of possibility on possibility, of banal pleasure on death, turns out to be at the heart of the musical structure, in a ceaseless layering of potential ironies. The score is thus an early example of the problematic we have come to designate as modernity.¹⁴⁶

It is worth saying that the apparently divergent conceptions of modernity presented by Clark and Rifkin are, in fact, remarkably similar. They share a

143 '... "reactionary artists of every age" (Botticelli, Rubens, Boucher, Ingres, Gustave Moreau). Hadjinicolaou 1973, p. 76.

144 Rifkin 2000, p. 44.

145 Rifkin 2000, pp. 44–5.

146 Rifkin 1988a, p. 103.

structure of feeling, both presenting the unmooring of representation as the key character of modern life. However, whereas Clark views with horror the dislocation of sign and social world, the point at which representation slides into the hyperventilation of the 'spectacle', Rifkin sees the utopian dimensions for multiple and displaced subjects. Fluidity of meaning and the unhinging of the sign are not negative forces in Rifkin's work; they are sometimes positive characteristics of modernity. Being a hyphenated gay-Jewish-leftist has something to do with the difference. This is not so much a shift to identity politics – he has always recognised that anti-identity thinking and identity politics do not easily mesh together – but something more like recognition of distinct insertions of subjectivity into the culture of the modern. In 'Gay Paris: Trace and Ruin' he examines the 'heterotopic capacity of the doorway' – a place of public sex – and its erasure with modern digi-code access. In this essay the flâneur is queered.¹⁴⁷ Themes from Baudelaire, Poe, Benjamin and Simmel are worked over again from the perspective of the gay male experience of the city. The focus of this study falls on the way capitalist gentrification transforms the gay imagination of the city and the 'aleatory poetic of the urban encounter'.¹⁴⁸ It is one of the exemplary Benjaminian takes on modern experience, but it overturns many of the themes and objects of study we associate with that perspective. The problem with this approach is that contemporary capitalism seems to be wholly at ease with unhinging of meaning, with irony, dislocation and multiplicity.

Ariadne: Filaments of The Self

Rifkin's later work, focused on gay poetics, cities and space and an aesthetic or poetics of music, increasingly moved away from the kind of archival work that predominates in this collection in favour of anachronism as method – a conscious projection of his contemporary values into the past. In this body of thinking he frequently takes his own subjectivity as a thread through the archive of knowledge forms. This work is not represented in this volume, or only included tangentially; his book on Ingres provides a clear example and other material can be found on his website.¹⁴⁹ In part, this approach developed out

147 See also Rifkin 1993, where Guerin regrets the freedoms won and where the word 'gay' proved 'no substitute for the old days, for the flâneur's freedom to drift behind the coding of occlusion' (p. 207).

148 Rifkin 2002, p. 126.

149 gai-savoir.net.

of a response to Michel Foucault's argument that the homosexual was an invention of the nineteenth century. How could the historian deal with the ostensible evaporation of his or her object of study?¹⁵⁰ Wouldn't queer experience then disappear from the archive? Rifkin generalised this question so that it became a problem of historical method. The essay 'The long run of modernity, or an essay on post-dating', included here, sets out his own doubts about the postmodernism narrative, but this shift or reconceptualisation of Benjamin's dialectical image can be seen as the 'postmodern' underpinning of his later work. His book on Ingres, with its various 'stagings' of the artist, provides a clear example. In the final section of his odd book, discussions of Ingres as he appears in the history of art are crossed with a conversation between Brad, Scott and Tyler in a leather bar – characters gleaned from cheap gay-porn fiction.¹⁵¹ The 'and now' is an important formulation for this kind of historical thinking, which looks at art as a series of layered receptions. There musings on desire bring new points of view to bear on historical objects, breaking the silence and instantiating a rupture. In fact, this perspective has its Marxist precedent in Lukács's discussion of 'necessary anachronism' in *The Historical Novel*.¹⁵² According to Lukács this approach was to be found in both Goethe and Hegel and was contrasted with a naïve and unconscious anachronism, which transposed ideas from the present 'to an age or nation whose entire outlook *contradicts* such modern ideas' (Hegel). Lukács wrote of Hegel:

He maintains that 'necessary anachronism' can emerge organically from historical material, if the past portrayed is clearly recognized and experienced by contemporary writers as the *necessary prehistory* of the present. Then the only kind of heightening required – in modes of expression, consciousness, etc. – is such that will clarify and underline this relationship. And then the remoulding of events, customs, etc. in the past would simply come to this: the writer would allow those tendencies which were alive and active in the past and which in historical reality have led up to the present ... to emerge with the emphasis which they possess in objective, historical terms for the product of this past, namely, the present.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Foucault 1981.

¹⁵¹ Rifkin 2000, pp. 135–50. I find Hoffman as a central presence in the conjuncture unconvincing. Ingres may be a musical artist, and the 'uncanny' might be important, but the presence of Hoffman seems just too wilful.

¹⁵² Lukács 1969, pp. 67–9.

¹⁵³ Lukács 1969, pp. 67–8.

For Lukács the primary practitioner of necessary anachronism was Walter Scott, and its manifesto was the preface to *Ivanhoe*. The problem is that severed from a political project the anachronistic approach can become unhinged and arbitrary. Rifkin would, no doubt, be unhappy with the sense of historical necessity in this approach and his own take is likely to be related to Rancière's argument in *The Names of History*, which criticises historians' tendency to 'over contextualise' and thus become blind to the exceptional instance or the emergent pattern.¹⁵⁴ The lack of fit generates history and art is a temporal condition. *The Names of History* is an important book for Rifkin that impacted on his sense of a poetics of history. Reading the past through one's own subjectivity becomes one way of outflanking the present. Stripped of the Rancièrian rhetoric it is the problem of any non-contradictory totality and the same thought can be found in various strands of critical Marxism. The problem remains, and I think it runs through even some of the best cultural theory: how to prevent the aleatory from tipping over into arbitrary and under-determined patterns.

Fundamentally, these 'late' essays employ Rifkin's own experience and subjectivity as a way of tracing filaments of contemporary culture. They are attempts to unravel the threads of the self, while keeping their distance from identity politics. In these studies aleatory encounters figure more than alterity. For instance, through some materials of French culture – Henry Murger's bohemia, burial at Père Lachaise cemetery, films by Renoir and Marcel Carné, anti-Semitic texts and Wagnerism – the Jew appears as a 'creator of conjunctions and chance encounters'.¹⁵⁵ In this manner '... for a certain moment in the history of capitalist democracies, and at certain sites, the Jew becomes more than a sign pointing to alterity or abjection; an embodied grammar, a means for making sense, an indispensable structure of the self'.¹⁵⁶

Those familiar with Adrian Rifkin know he is famed for two contradictory characteristics. The first is his lethargy. I remember one conversation in his Southsea flat during the mid-1980s. He had been reading the memoirs of a gay revolutionary – Daniel Guérin, I recall – which was structured around the author's serial sexual encounters. Adrian said that if he were to write such a book the topos would have to be the afternoon nap. Of course, there is something subversive about this idleness as a response to the productivist drive of the academic machine. This collection of Rifkin's essays shows the signs of that torpid state. It is made from the remnants of unfinished work. His import-

154 Rancière 1994.

155 Lukács 1969, p. 279.

156 Rifkin 1995c, p. 291.

ant book on the visual culture of the Commune was never finished. In an essay from 1983, he acknowledged the point: 'I had thought to say that it is a preliminary sketch for a much longer, more definitive etc etc, but since the preliminary sketch has become more or less a vocation, it would be silly'.¹⁵⁷ What other art historian would have discovered photographs documenting the murals from the Swiss café run by Communard exiles Gaillard *père* and *fils* and left them unpublished for 30 years? (This incredible find is included in the present book.) All that is left of pioneering archival work and much critical thinking on the Commune are the essays published here. His *Gay Poetics* book remains uncompleted, perhaps unwritten. What we have instead are traces of programmes of research; the remains of lines of thought and work begun. If lethargy is one dominant strain in Rifkin's character, the other – its anti-pode – is a restless intellectual energy. He continually initiates new projects and engages fresh ideas, only to set them aside, move on, and try out new perspectives. For instance, now that he has retired from teaching, he has taken to reworking the projects just mentioned as voiceless PowerPoint presentations, suspended, as it were, between vision and writing. I recently attended a 'talk' that was more performance than traditional lecture. His practice as a historian is wilfully avant-garde and irreverent towards established ideas, particularly radical ideas. This avant-gardism has meant that his work has often failed to find an audience at the time it was produced and, of course, he revels in his own legend. At the same time, his restiveness has generated some of the most creative Marxist work in cultural history. Rifkin questioned the established centrality and sequence of art history's most valued objects; suggested novel theoretical constellations; has written materialist histories of art that contribute to the most advanced work on modes of production and social totality; and offered reflections on revolution, ideology and representation that should be of broad interest to Marxists. He is attentive to debates on gender and sexuality and their crossings with Marxist thinkers as diverse as Lefebvre and Adorno. He was also among the first to pick up on Gramsci's importance for rethinking art and its histories, as well as Rancière's intervention into social history. So, if this book is made up of traces and ruins, it is also full with beginnings. Perhaps, there really is nothing to regret.

157 Rifkin 1983a, p. 36.

Re-Reading by Torchlight

Adrian Rifkin

The editor of this volume, in a gesture that I welcome as a chance to put some order amongst what today looks to me like a series of disrupted and partial projects – if projects they ever were – has rightly asked me to write about the relation of my work to Marxism and materialism, or materialist philosophies, by way of a *mise-en-scène*. I take this as a general question about how and why one writes rather than an interrogation of materialism as such, which I am ill-equipped to undertake. In any event, from where would I set out? Just to choose, say, between reading *New Left Review* or Mao's *Little Red Book* in the late 60s or Jacques Rancière's *La leçon d'Althusser* (1974) a few years later would entail two surprisingly different narratives; and then one might prefer to start out from the disputes in British historical writing between the new Gramscians and the social-control determinists of the early 1970s. Or again from Pasolini's cinematic materialism or Lucien Sève's psychologistic deviation from mainstream French Communism (*Marxisme et théorie de la personnalité*, Éditions sociales, Paris, 1969); even then these remain but a few of the elements of my own, private muddle.

So one way of opening the matter would be to say something of the apparent unfinishedness of my work as well as the unexpected recurrence of important themes – so aptly noted by Steve Edwards, who was a privileged witness; or about how and why all of this happened, somewhere between my own idleness as well as unconstrained curiosity and tendency to look aside or get distracted; and, all important, the realities of writing against the excitements and sometimes terrible disappointments of working full time in English Higher Education from 1970 until the present. Or rather, writing with and against these everyday realities as I always tried to shape them, though hardly ever on the grounds of my own choosing – and however vigorously they were contested and re-invented in local and national struggles, trade union actions or occupations. For example the protracted and then famous occupation that spread from the Department of Fine Art, where I taught in Portsmouth, and across the Polytechnic. And which, uniquely, lasted six weeks throughout an Easter vacation, demanding a more inclusive transfer of art and design into the new institution, engaging in a frenzy of utopian social and educational activity – a heady mix of risk and bliss!

For I have no doubt of the banal truth that we, my generation roughly speaking, were creatures of a specific and quite original institutional framework, that

of the explosive development of Higher Education in the UK, that began with the creation of the Polytechnics in 1969.

It sucked us in out of the old and 'redbrick' universities alike and, in my area, in the conjoining of art schools with polytechnics under the remit of the Coldstream and Summerson reports, gave rise not only to the Hornsey and then Portsmouth uprisings, but also to the profession of art history as we know it now, to the idea of theory in the studio and as a studio practice and, eventually, the notion of practice-based research. Art & Language, with which I had little sympathy as an artistic and philosophical tendency, belongs in this frame too, but our coexistence is a symptom of a relation between art and writing, polymorphous, protean too, that has been a substance generated in this process and with which we have crafted our different attempts at doing something that seemed proper to our situation. It was odd to end up in Art Writing at Goldsmiths, a counter-discipline that I take as a gerund(ive), a noun of process and a kind of obligation to remain incomplete; but was like acquiring, in the end, a proper proper name.

In 2011–12 this unfolding of a possible system of relatively free education came to a crashing halt, following the report of a 'captain of industry' who brought the Gulf of Mexico to the brink of ecological disaster, and who left his company not because of this crime, but because, in spite of his considerable social power, he was frightened in his being gay, and fell before a trivial 'scandal'. Anyway I have sat through this process, from Labour Education Minister Anthony Crosland to Lord Browne, from beginning to end.

Suffice it to say that many of us who first came to work in the Polys were deeply discontented with our 'privileged' lot in the old universities, fired by the anti-Vietnam protests, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Hippy moment and *International Times*, the *Dialectics of Liberation*, the Living Theatre and radical art or sexual movements; the Arts Lab and Black Power too – you can hear me as one of the voices over in Britain's only Black Power film of that period: Frankie Dymon Junior's *Death May Be Your Santa Claus* (1969, BFI 2011). And we had a sense of social and public service or of the values of a public sector, and, in general, we leaned different degrees to the left. I attended the meetings of the Revolutionary Students' Socialist Federation at the LSE in 1968 and certainly was present at the general meeting of 10 November that year where a Manifesto was issued that, amongst other things, proclaimed, and I quote at length:

7. RSSF recognises that the trend of modern capitalism to the increasing integration of manual and mental labour, of intellectual and productive work, makes the intellectual element increasingly crucial to the development of the economy and society, and that this productive force comes

into sharpening conflict with the institutional nature of capitalism. The growing revolutionary movement of students in all advanced capitalist countries is a product of this. To organise this vital sector as a revolutionary ally of the proletariat and as an integral part of the building of a new revolutionary movement, RSSF resolutely opposes ruling-class control of education and determines to struggle for an education system involving comprehensive higher education, and the abolition of the binary system, public schools and grammar schools. The transformation of this sector requires the generation of a revolutionary socialist culture.¹

I do not believe that, at this point, I really engaged critically with this wonderfully militant and optimistic catachresis of Gramsci + Althusser + Mao. Perhaps because I was otherwise too submerged in the voluptuousness of the Arts Lab in Drury Lane and was anyway largely unaware of these issues, even though I had a subscription to *NLR*, as I had to the *London Magazine* and *Artforum*. Perhaps too because I knew that given my own origins – grammar school, Oxford, etc. – that the good intentions of self-abolition would, in the end, scarcely pave the pathway to utopia. And also because I had to wait years for Gayatri Spivak to write of the glory of catachresis as such! We tried very hard to be pure, in a blessedly unending failure.

Yet it was enough to be going by, a passion and a reason to commit oneself to a new institution of higher education; an institution through which we gave a measure and a quality to the idea of a democratic education, and which has ended up weighing and measuring the value of its members like so many baubles in a feudal ceremony. We wanted, come what may, 'Full democracy in access to higher education ... Abolition of all inequality between institutions of higher education – against hierarchy and privilege'. And in return for fighting for that we have ended up where we are, for however vociferous, however much we proliferated journals and tracts and learned texts and syllabuses and set the pace in arts and humanities research and disciplinary reformation, we were never more than a tiny minority in that hegemonic machinery. Sexism, homophobia and racial exclusion have all survived well enough in these institutions, despite a leading role in their critique having come from within them. And the commitment to democracy came to a grinding halt with the creation of a single university sector with the abolition of the Polys in 1992, their collective managers assuming newly extravagant titles, ceremonial robes and salaries.

1 Revolutionary Socialist Students' Manifesto, available at: <http://www.socialismtoday.org/n8/manifesto.html>.

Ah well.

So in all this there already is a hint of how to write this piece; one comes to and from the Marxian text not just by deciding to read it and having read it – I did that in plenty as an undergraduate, without taking in more than a few phrases, no more or less at the time than I got from Locke or Hobbes or even Descartes. I did Marx and Hegel and Marx and Rousseau, as one did at Oxford in those days, and also the history of the Comintern and the US presidency – ‘preferring’ Stalin to Eisenhower – just as I read Austin and Ryle and Marshall and Pigou and Keynes, whose inheritors were a kind of upper class British and sometimes emigré ‘left’, Joan Robinson, Balogh, Kaldor, Christopher Hill and others. And I dreamed of defacing the dreaming spires as the Chinese students had the Ming tombs. So when RSSF demanded an ‘An end to bourgeois ideology masquerading as education in courses and lectures ...’ I reckoned that I knew exactly what we meant.

Yet lines and ideas from all these courses and readings still emerge in my own sentences. I cannot think without Descartes’ *Second Meditation* any more than I can think without the Freudo-Lacanian dispersal of its imaginary powers. I am happy that this is so, for writing needs texts that emerge as its necessities at the moment of its inscription on the page or screen (I only truly learned to write with a word-processor), as well as being its critical and thought-through preconditions. Hence it may be that the moment when Marxist citation or structures of thinking seemed the most important may well have been, so as to speak, one’s least materialist and more dreamy or even deluded moments; but also one comes to different kinds of text through a certain experience, which itself differentiates their qualities or cross-hatches them the one against the other, generating the process of the intertextual as a substance of being conscious and critical. Marx for anger, James Baldwin for longing and fascination. (Extensive, a spectre haunts Europe: intensive, *Giovanni’s Room*.)

It is viable to live intellectually between two bodies of texts that hardly face one another at all. The work of a Julia Kristeva or a Jacques Rancière, for example, to take just two of my own incommensurables, and to see that the work of *Tel Quel*, when I first read it in the 1960s, was as odd a take on materialism as could be envisaged at that time, turning historical archive and psychoanalytic space into one another. Kristeva’s essays on Giotto, Bellini and Holbein remain an immense achievement in art historical writing, one of the finest of the last fifty years and their complexity was enthralling. At the same time Rancière’s departure from Althusser was the return to another recent discovery, that of the voice of the ‘sans-part’, already found in E.P. Thompson, in his account of history from below. Rancière transmuted this into something radically fresh, into a notion of class relations in which the recognition of the

misrecognition between dreams and social objectives becomes a part of the theatre of politics, as of aesthetics. For me, as for him, this was a way around and aside from the capturing debates on materialist dialectics that were spun around Althusser, Gramsci, Mao, problems of social control v. hegemony and so forth. We turned our gaze just a fraction, *écarter*, to use Rancière's own preferred word, and the world looked wholly different.

To cultivate a life in this space, of what is incommensurable, at the level of a formal critique of the internal and relational consistencies and inconsistencies of such texts, is far from being what was once condemned as eclecticism, but rather a material recognition of the episteme or the *dispositif* which speaks us – Foucault + Voloshinov – ‘turning and turning in the widening gyre’, out of control, to borrow a line from Yeats. And if the control is lost in media res, in the middle of a programme of research and writing, as happens here with the titular pieces on the Paris Commune, writing them is a matter of tacking, of trying to avoid and to reach by turn unknown perils and unknown destinations – all the while trying to hold to those principles of RSSF, a decade and then four decades down the road. Theory will occur at its most powerful at the level of the sentence, in the next phrase, the determination to proceed.

Obviously enough in writing this I am begging all the big questions of ‘experience’ and ‘theory’ that so vexed us in the 1970s, that haunted the development of cultural studies, and the battles between Louis Althusser and E.P. Thompson that were fought out in our work, or in the feminism of a Sheila Rowbotham or a Griselda Pollock, or the struggles of the gay left – not to mention the cultural Marxism of a George Thompson. And if I seem, paradoxically, to be prioritising experience, even if – here – this experience is represented as essentially scholarly and theoretical, I have set aside that other of the street fighting things; election campaigns, violent demonstrations such as Lewisham 78 (scary but serious fun), selling left newspapers in freezing winter markets as well as white nights writing them, and so forth. (In 1974 I stood as a Maoist Candidate, CPE M-L, for the Portsmouth South constituency, in both the general election campaigns.)

In this rather obvious and rather more domestic little example, the realisation that, in the day to say, we do not choose our own ground just as we might wish – even if we truly knew where it lay, lies the secret of the canonical status of *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and our immense investment in it. Even if the stage on which we end up is neither one of tragedy nor farce, but more one of both-ersome things and more or less frequent pleasures and, of course, deadlines.

And here too, ironically, is the beginning of a critique of a Marxian literalism to which ‘we’ then aspired in our enthusiasm, for if we might have imagined the precipitous historical temporalities of French revolutions and their histories as models of materialist thought in Marx’s version, our own place in his meta-

phoric was less certain and more fragile. If only my *mise-en-scène* had ever been the match of a Corneille for tragedy or of a Lubitsch for farce! Were I but somewhere between the different refinements of great tragedy and true farce, the equally astonishing rhetorical sublimeness of the fated hero and the screw-ball heroine; such wishful thinking!

(If, in retrospect, I were to have a model for comportment, it would be the moment, the gesture near the beginning of Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or not To Be* (1942) when the heroine bursts onto the stage (within a staging) (within a cinematic frame) to announce that she will wear her shimmering cocktail dress for the scene in the concentration camp (hic Rhodus), or another moment in Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980) when a camera turns around a revolving scene of chaotic human movement, as Biberkopf stumbles through the hell he has made for himself, and the reflexive becomes both enigma and a phantasm of clarity; how can one come to write like this? Or I would like to pass in the perfected and deeply rooted vulgarity of Frankie Howerd, but I can't find a model in academe, not one.)

And there is also an interesting question about what is a first time (as ...), and what a second time (as ...), how we know which is which in the complex networks of individual and collective experience in the quotidian, on these unchosen grounds. If one chooses the point of understanding, as we do, in close readings, discussions or in making practical gestures or speech acts, as the injunction 'hic salta', in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, it may be no more than a singular gesture, but even or especially in its repetition; one can jump over and over again, here and there, high and low; and if this is the case, then we may as well also accept that there is no rule for the succession of tragedy and farce, nor for the exact feel of either. The more so as to know exactly the time of a first or second instance is no easier a matter than that of not choosing one's ground, and that once accepted this double mystery also discloses that the over-determined gestures of the historical materialist need have no hostility to the lapsus of the post-Freudian subject, nor to the psychoanalytic time of deferred action. On the contrary they belong together in the play of appearances and – eventually – of causes. Of this much a retrospect of these essays assures me, of the normality of the nothing-finished set against a question about when on earth it was begun.

Here the matter of an intervention in or a contribution to gay and queer studies is a puzzling one for me, of the how, when and where. If I read Guy Hocquenghem's immense *Désir homosexuel* (1972) soon after it was published, I certainly did not carry it with me in quite the way that, say, I carried what I call the green Engels of *Anti-Dühring*. In the disputes of the 70s between class liberation and personal or sexual liberation, their prioritising, their mutual and

different relations to psychoanalysis, I definitely took the part of class struggle though I always read Freud and then Lacan and was entranced by a text like *Civilisation and its Discontents*.

So if I found myself engaged in a reading of the gay and then the queer as a priority in thinking this was as much a belated rebellion against the dramatic inadequacies of the left as of my own enthusiastic and fascinated participation in those strange rounds of urban life that are, or were, gay cruising and clubbing. In this sense Hocquenghem supported me both in his textual realisation of bodily desire, perhaps with John Rechy and James Baldwin rather than Jean Genet, and as a theoretical resource he enabled a very specific and distant reading of American and English queer studies as they trickled out and then became a torrent. So often an important text comes simply too late for one to gain from it as one has already, before it, substituted other experience for what it will have to say. In this sense the tendency in queer studies towards a close reading of the Church fathers, as in Mark D. Jordan (*The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*, 1997), was ever more valuable for the work I wanted to structure than the critical urgencies of a Judith Butler or an Eve Sedgwick. These only came into my sustained attention through the reading of my own PhD students and my discussions with them and these discussions, in their way, determined my own space in gay and queer studies. As for the performative, I am still irremediably stuck with Austin himself, just as in the face of deconstruction and its miraculous efficacy I cannot forgo the initiation into thought that was *La pensée sauvage* (1962).

But two or three things: all the early gay/queer pieces emerge from studies of the city and the way in which it precipitates *dispositifs* of comportment, of which I knew this one very well; in part I felt compelled to write of its glorious enigma because my engagement in it took up so much of my time. Then, 'curiouser and curiouser', this knowing corresponds to the way that I came to Adorno already subjugated (as a teenager) by the allure of late Beethoven and Mahler, a near obsession that enabled me to approach him and his anger with profound sympathy. Yet my equal obsession with Wagner and Colette (whom Adorno despises) led me, for my own sake, to separate from him too and accept my disappointment with the promises of even the greatest thinking. And, again, in the allure of Adorno and of Benjamin my reading of the commodity critique was ever set on guard in my being, already and always, as they say, something of a style faddist ('my first Beatles jacket' is another possible beginning, from the round collar of the Beatles to the round collar of Mao; the first time as farce and the second as tragedy, perhaps).

The commodity critique that ends in the blind alley of *The Society of the Spectacle*, by Guy Debord, and what was for me the ghastly boredom of Situ-

ationism, is terribly unaware of the unconscious and the power of its absolute singularity – something in which Kristeva has been my long-term guide. So here I insist on the incessant interruption of the body, desire, greed or love, in the valorising discipline of academic argument as such, just as the voice from below in Thompson or Rancière is just such another and paradigmatic of the counter-discipline of the body in historical and critical writing.

I could take this on and on, and on, as the words of the battle hymn enjoin us, but I want to take just this from historical materialism, two words of Marx, that go on and on too, to every beginning, new or old:

Hic salta,

No!

Rather:

Hic Rhodus

Here is the Rose

PART 1

New Art Histories



Art's Histories

This essay starts from an assumption that one reasonable precondition of the development of a form of knowledge should be the questioning of its phenomenal representation as a form. A model for such a procedure could be found in the way that Marx questions the commodity as a fundamental form of the appearance of capitalist society in the first chapter of *Capital*, in order to reconstitute a knowledge of political economy.¹ In art history, which is a kind of representation of history and a commodity, the linking of the words 'art' and 'history' has come about through long-term processes. It is produced within the social formations that developed the modern concept of 'art', the professionalisation and specialisation of academic disciplines, the rise of the modern art market, and so on. But while it comes out of history, it is at the same time a denial of historicity. For art has no meaning other than the sum of its historically specific ones; and a history of art that requires a unified field of meaning therefore implies that there is no history. It would seem unlikely, then, that a new art history that really takes up this issue can long remain a history of art. But if it does not take it up, then it cannot be new.

The idea of a new art history feels stale. It suggests an anxious liberal stratagem to market a faded product in a new package. A new art history can be, and is, cut up into discretely separate portions, and each of these is consigned to its sector within a given division of intellectual work. A social history of art, a feminist or Marxist history of art, a women's history of (women's) art. Or a history of the art of colonialised countries or of the confrontation of high arts and popular arts. Or a history of discourses on art, or of masterpieces re-read in the light of different kinds of philosophy, or a combination of several kinds. Piecework like this both lends itself to the dispersion of, say, feminist or Marxist art histories to an individual place within a field of purely scholarly enterprise, and adapts itself to limiting the intervention of other kinds of expertise: literary, scientific or psychoanalytic. It permits the elaboration, within the already constituted domain of art history, of these philosophies and methods that, however diverse

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1 Marx 1996.

their aims and contradictions, will be adapted to its objects of knowledge. It generates new experts whose apparently voluntary eclecticism it structures and whose apparent freedom it requires.

The common element of all these new art histories is the coupling, one way round or the other, of those two words 'art' and 'history'. They remake the coupling, and it holds them together too. But whether you take it in the shape of the museum, the coffee table book, the auction house catalogue or the scholarly monograph, in forms new or old, it signals only one series of valued objects, objects whose culturally ascribed value demands that they have their own history. This is the 'series' which Walter Benjamin described as the expropriated trophies of class domination, ripped out of their production in history, represented as the natural repository of values, and demanding acquiescence that they should be recognised as such.² It is to this series that new art historians put their new questions, it is this series that they try to remake as radical, or Marxist or feminist or whatever. Even though they know that the series is an effect of history, they refuse to allow this knowledge to undermine their object of study. The production of the series can be seen as part of its value, but not as its very condition of existence. In the end, when that most conservative of cultural theorists, E.H. Gombrich, insists that 'we' should always set out from the canon, more often than not radical art historians fall into line, although they might first insist that the canon gets filled out a bit.³

Even in a relatively new situation, such as the creation of a museum like the Musée d'Orsay where historians work on the forming of its contents, the social and cultural prestige of the series prevails. This museum is to be equipped through the transfer of accepted masterpieces from the whole of Paris, and so it is to the series that the historians address themselves. What objects should go in this museum? Should there be trolley buses alongside the Monets, looms with the Courbets, images of workers confronting the culture of the middle class? All this to rework the history of art. But supposing it is agreed that its accepted icons are signs of something other than their own history as a series, it might then be appropriate to reverse the question. No longer what objects should go in the museum but instead in which museum should the objects be put?

So, to take up a type of argument which new art historians have been right to make, but to go a little further: if a painting like Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) produces its meanings only in the way in which it constructs a

² Benjamin 1973b, p. 258.

³ Gombrich 1975, p. 57.

relation with colonialised African cultures (in its use of masks); through a fear of prostitution and venereal disease as part of a dominant discourse on women (its setting in a brothel); and the emergence of the provincial (Spanish) artist in Parisian cultural life, then, in which museum should it be put? Assuming an ideal world, in which such museums exist, should it be in the museum of colonial oppression and liberation, the museum of gender formation, or the museum of social climbing? To reposit the question in this way is perhaps banal, but at least it asks about the nature of the series-objects. It does not simply seek to give them extra meaning in their already constructed place. It is not content to merely question the inflated price tags put on paintings, nor the author's role as a marker of certainty and identity in the huge operations of international patronage and finance needed to mount the one-man show or epochal exhibition. Rather, it goes a little behind these phenomena.

Although possibly leading to a romantic conception of art, a text of Jacques Derrida effects this displacement by pulling the word 'art' out of any certainty of possessing a simple meaning:

So, if one broached the lessons on art or on the aesthetic by a question of this type (what is art?, what is the origin of art or of works of art? which is the sense of art? what does art mean/want to say?), the form of the question is already a reply. In it art would already be predetermined, or pre-understood. Already a conceptual opposition, which has traditionally served to understand art, would be at work: for example that of meaning as internal content and of the form. Under the apparent diversity of the historical forms of art, concepts of art or words which seem to translate 'art' into Greek, Latin, German etc. (but the closure of this list is already problematic) one is looking for a single and naked meaning. It would inform from within, like a content, distinguishing itself from the forms which it informs. To think art in general one thus accredits a series of oppositions (sense/form, inside/outside, content/container, signified/signifier, represented/representer/tative etc.) which *precisely* structures the traditional interpretation of works of art. One makes of art, in general, an object in which one can pretend to distinguish an interior sense, an *invariant*, and a multiplicity of external variations *across* which, like so many veils, one would try to see or to restore the true full sense of origin – one, naked ...⁴

4 Derrida 1978, p. 26. Translation by the author.

Taking this text to art histories can help identify firstly the way in which the series acts as the invariant of the meaning of all art history and secondly the way that though the different art histories see each other as the veil that shrouds a truer meaning for art, their real unity lies in their contestation of the object of knowledge and their common refusal to contest its status. Even when they hotly deny an invariant value, they tend to do so by refusing it to an individual item while allowing the series to retain its status.

More often than not, these conflicts in an academic field are a sign of its renewal rather than its dispersal into new forms of knowledge. This process itself is very often a site for the representation of wider social conflict. For instance, in the general area of cultural history and theory of the last four decades and since the appearance of *The Second Sex* of Simone de Beauvoir,⁵ the most powerful social movement has been feminism, in all its diverse forms. (No doubt anti-colonial and anti-racist movements will eventually have an equivalent effect). On the whole, Marxist or social or sociological histories of art have been content to contest the ownership of the interpretation of the valued series while refusing to put this structure of values under any serious threat. They have also been content to assume the underlying irreducibility of its foundations in abstract notions of quality and progress. Although some women's work has limited itself to the addition of women to the series, other more radical feminist tendencies have cut away at the residual, humanistic underpinning of the power of the series, showing that the last resort of its invariant value is not only not a resort, but a last ditch against more progressive values. This also takes issues a stage further than the way in which sociology demystifies, and ends up in neutralising art. For it reveals the way art, in its practice and in its history, continues to be a site of conflict. A movement like radical feminism meets with a resistance which either reassigns it to a place within the piecework (a proper area of women's work), or reasserts traditional critical activities. One of these, and one of the most crucial and deceitful, is the habit of ascribing quality to defeat the logic of feminist conclusions on art. For though the ascription of quality is usually represented as an objective skill to be learned, an empirical sifting of the raw material on the basis of recognised and natural criteria, it is in fact an empty activity. While claiming to combat the reductionism of those who insist that quality is social and historical, it is in fact wholly overdetermined by the interests of finance, social order, stability and conservatism in academic discourse. A talismanic warding off of change whose own origins and functions are repressed, ascribing quality is a hysteria of cultural production.

5 de Beauvoir 1968.

In relation to art history, feminism stands as an iconoclastic danger from without and a demand for the transformation of its professional relations and directions of study from within. (This is similar to its relation with a number of academic disciplines.) Here the new art history reveals its basically reactionary nature by setting out to police the boundaries of the threat of this dual collapse. The new art history can be defined as the academic enterprise which reinstates the elementary terms of the tradition from which it comes, turning political and social movements into specialisms and confounding interdisciplinary investigations by turning them back on the series-object. Looking at any sample of new art histories will show that sometimes they will 'take on' the feminist argument: but taking on is, more often than not, an option. The masterpieces stay put.

Photography also has a history made out of a series of 'masterworks', a history which is dominant in its display in museums. But the history of photography as a process (born out of and developed through industrial technologies, rapidly launched as an amateur pursuit and a tool of big business, war and the state) distances it from the aestheticised form of its representation. The existence of a magazine like *Amateur Photographer*, with its unabashed stereotyping of class, race and gender, sport, general knowledge and adventure under the signboard of the most reactionary ideologies, implies a vast social distance from any irreducible and invariant stratum of cultural value. One result of the situation is that photography has been more readily accepted as a starting point for an interdisciplinary study that, following the logic of its methods, is able to move out into a radical dismantling of social relations without having to bring these discoveries back as nothing more than meanings for the hallowed series. This difference between art and photography makes the task of dealing with an history more difficult but no less urgent. For though art plays the stranger to photography's more overtly vulgar meanings, its intimate implication with them is hidden only by its social prestige.

But practices of art or of art history do not cease to be practised as a result of demystification. To demystify is not to exhaust a practice as a starting point for cognitive discovery nor to eliminate it as a site of social contention. The value of the artist as a human type, for example, is not used up in the understanding of its historical origins and ideological ambiguities. Though at one point the artist might look like the ideal of the thinking as well as working artisan, and at another like the model of the capitalist male who seems to produce something out of nothing, there still remains between these two a terrain for the appropriation of values. To say this is not to attribute to art the category of liberty, as does Marcuse.⁶ It is simply to insist that in a society organised

6 Marcuse 1978.

around an ideology of individual freedom, any such model for this freedom is a legitimate object of desire as well as a means of social regulation. The unhealthy and reactionary glorification of technology which has come to the fore in dominant discourses on education deploys precisely this vulgar utilitarianism to dispute the freedom of choice supposedly underlying its economic basis. In these circumstances, confronted with the factitious merits of design education, art education stands in a new phase of its history. Other things apart, a new art history should have to understand this history of art. Politically, its value will depend upon how it does so.

Can Gramsci Save Art History? Traditional Art History – Some Aspects of The Problem*

A materialist or Marxist art history exists only in relation to traditional or 'bourgeois' art history, which is made up of many institutions and their staffs of intellectuals, and we cannot take one apart from the other. For whatever else may have happened during the 1970s, traditional art history has flourished as never before, in increasing numbers of graduate and undergraduate courses in universities and polytechnics. There are pure art history courses, mixed courses, courses in museum studies, and art historians are more and more often expected to work in courses of cultural and historical studies. The tentative shift to an emphasis on design history of ten years ago is now possibly the main area of development. This expansion is reflected quite directly in the need to form a professional association such as this one, and design historians too have an organisation. Apart from this institutional growth, the corporate patronage of fine art has also changed and expanded into certain areas. We can see this in the big exhibitions financed by tobacco or computer companies, and also in T.V. programmes sponsored by Time-Life, which, taken together, form the great public spaces in which art education is carried out, in which art history is popularised. Ideologically, in terms of ideas and viewpoints, they are closely intertwined with the profession and its institutions and depend upon them for their intellectual status.

In the normal discourse of traditional art history all these things are taken for granted, or greeted on the assumption that more is better. You can hear much more talk – it is only fair to say this – of contextualisation and 'background' than

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* This article is a slightly revised version of the opening talk given in the Art/Politics sessions of the annual conference of the Association of Art Historians. It was intended to raise various questions that would be developed in some of the subsequent sessions, and to suggest a number of problems that confront a Marxist art history today. It was in no way supposed to deal with art practice as political activity at the present, as this was not a subject of any of the papers given. And even while its subject is limited to art history, it is neither exhaustive nor comprehensive, and criticisms of one-sidedness have not been met in revising it.

ever before, and far more use of the word 'society', and possibly this happens because the expansion of traditional art history confronts it with an audience of unprecedented complexity, and with new demands. But contextualisation itself is a questionable concept, one which embodies a distinction between the way in which the history of art can be explained on the one hand, and 'real' history on the other. All too often, in fact, it means no more than some complementary studies, the description of some parallel developments. What might context mean? When Sir Hugh Casson writes, in the introduction to the catalogue of the Post-Impressionist show: 'In planning this exhibition we had two aims in view', does 'we' include I.B.M. (U.K.)? Certainly it should, even if Casson might not think so, and that it does is an essential part of the conditions of production of the exhibition and its catalogue. I find that this catalogue, as well as the catalogue of the Abstraction show at the Tate,¹ forms part of what seems to be a frontal regression from a serious art history: that is, art history as more than the textual underpinning of the ideological construct that is the chronological and typological organisation of paintings: art history as more (or less, even) than an opaque layer between the work of art exhibited and its processes of production and the meanings it can have.

Here is a sample from the Post-Impressionism catalogue, chosen not from the introductory essays with their illusory appearance of fact, but from the entries, from Italy – Balla:

360 ... THE WORKERS DAY, OR THEY WORK, EAT & GO HOME, OR BRICK-LAYERS. The paintings depict construction sites near Balla's studio in the Via Salaria. (cf. V. Dortch Dorazio 1969, no. 29). As M. Fagiolo Dell'Arco has noted, however, (1968, p. 19), the real subject is not the worker but the passage of light from mid-day (bottom left) to sunset (top left) to night (right). B. Sani, on the other hand, suggests that only two moments are shown. (Rome 1971/72, p. 152). Balla had first depicted nocturnal light in the SPARE DRAUGHT HORSE (1898, untraced). His WORK/LANTERN of 1902 (Winston, Birmingham, USA) has virtually no content other than its study of artificial light and, although it predates the WORKERS DAY, is a more direct antecedent of the famous ARC LAMP (1909–11, M.O.M.A., New York). Triptych forms are common in divisionist paintings but the horizontal division and the witty painted frame are highly original.

What is this about?

1 House and Stevens 1979; Bowness 1980.

It would not be easy to say what it is about, but we can note a number of elements in it, which are supported within the structure of its minute and detailed scholarly apparatus. First, the confidence with which the writer pronounces what is or is not the subject of the paintings – ‘not the worker, but the passage of light’, or ‘no content other than its study of artificial light’. The subject is quite separate from the divisionism with which it is painted, it is constituted through a simple process of observation, it cannot be ambiguous (‘not the worker’, ‘no content other’), its meaning is fixed and yet it cannot be explained. Chronology is all important, yet it too, in a semblance of intellectual coherence, can be made secondary to subject – ‘Lantern ... although it predates ... is a more direct antecedent ... arc lamp’. Certainly the ways in which the painting might have made meanings in terms of the related experiences of its producer and its viewers is not considered, and certainly it is as if the process of seeing it now is in no way related to these other questions. The final flourish in the entry, the ascription of ‘wit’ and ‘originality’, confirm this refusal, while pointing to the values embodied by it.

This critique could be developed, in more detail and in relation to more aspects of this catalogue, including the passages most rich in ‘context’. (e.g. The ‘Fourth Estate’, item 376 in the same section). But I only want to put the question of what kind of a guide is this for the unhappy visitor who takes it round the exhibition? – after all it is this catalogue that makes the otherwise overwhelming jumble of material into the history of art. I would like to have had time to use some examples of the Abstraction catalogue to show how, in a very thorough way, the motif of abstraction itself is used to present art history as an abstraction – a construction of ideal, inexplicable and irrational conceptions that sustain, nourish and reproduce the de-historicised, traditional history of art. The sections ‘Zurich’, ‘Britain’ and ‘Italy’ stand out. It would have been most useful to have set the Italian sections of both catalogues alongside Gramsci’s few but penetrating and historically dynamic attempts to relate Futurism to the basic structure of Italian society.² We could then begin to see how, in this traditional art history, any sense of particularity vanishes into the general philosophy of art, so that even what it claims to be good at (valuing art), it does quite badly.

But, to return to Casson’s ‘we’, this kind of work is, as I have begun to suggest, profoundly based in the relation of its producers to their patrons, in the outlook of a particular grouping of intellectuals within the general system of ideology and institutional structures. Essentially they are intellectuals dependent upon

2 E.g., Gramsci 1978, pp. 6–11. (The text dates to 1913, and represents his earlier, more favourable assessment of the futurist movement in relation to stifling cultural traditions.)

the big monopolies and state institutions, universities and publishing houses, not only in the sense that, like most of us, they are paid through these organisations, but in terms of the values that they reproduce: in their reproduction of the relationship between bourgeois ideology (one very important aspect of it, that is) and the mode of production and social relations with which it is bound up.

Since these various categories of traditional intellectuals experience through an 'esprit de corps' their uninterrupted historical continuity and their special qualification, they thus put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group. This self assessment is not without consequences in the ideological and political field, consequences of wide ranging import. The whole of idealist philosophy can be connected by this position assumed by the social complex of intellectuals and can be defined as the expression of that social utopia by which the intellectuals think of themselves as 'independent', autonomous, endowed with a character of their own etc.³

I could pile up examples of the way in which the public places are filled with such exhibitions; it is, after all, a result of the dominant thinking in our profession and in our society. The big Courbet show of 1978 is my last, however, and emphasises the wholly international nature of the problem. There, you could see that, for an artist to be presented as 'great', he must appear without history and without contradiction, as the chronology of a personality. The paintings were at one point supplemented with caricatures, but of the forty or more reproduced the principal butt was Courbet's style – and that alone. The object in showing them appears to have been his presentation as a hero within a tradition of bourgeois artistic innovation (which, of course, in a way he was), but not as being in any way or at any time outside the confines of those social and artistic norms within which he was mocked. In particular the absence of the obscenely hate-filled attacks on Courbet the Communard, helped to absent the problem of real social disunity, class conflict and hatred, the presence of which could only have disrupted the ideal homogeneity of the cultural myth.⁴ The traditional history of an artist demands a hiatus between what is properly art and properly society.

3 Gramsci 1971, p. 7.

4 I am not arguing for the other myth, of Courbet as a more committed Communard than he was, only that the political process through which he ineluctably filled this role is one that must be suppressed to return him to the pantheon.

Some Elements of a New Art History

So if we now address ourselves to the great advances made in the last ten years towards the development of a Marxist art history, then we must be clear, in order to assess where we now stand, that we are addressing ourselves to a dominated tendency. The effect of this development upon the conservative tradition has not been such that we can conceive of an exhibition or an exhibition catalogue taking any form other than those we have just discussed. If Tim Clark's books, published in 1973, signalled not only a return to the kind of source material for French art history that could be found almost only in Rosenthal,⁵ but also brought about the transplantation within art history of the central problematics of ideological analysis, nonetheless, this mode of writing has continued to develop more in other areas of cultural history. Nicos Hadjinicolaou's book of the same year presents, whatever its crucial weaknesses, a powerful and coherent assertion of the centrality of Antal's work,⁶ yet the traditional 'obstructions' to a materialist art history that he so rightly attacks, remain, I suspect, as models for thousands of students. The integration of historical and art historical study as a basic principle and method of work is with us, but more within groupings of intellectuals than within the dominant structures. Work in Germany, in France (the Association Histoire et Critique des Arts), in the U.S.A. (The Marxist Caucus of the C.A.A. and various individuals), and elsewhere is contributing to this slow accumulation of a new art history.⁷

The socialist-feminist movement has had a powerful effect upon the writing of history, insisting that it should be maimed neither by the exclusion of women from history nor from its writing. A materialist art history too should be impossible without accepting the consequences of this movement, even though this means working on the continuously problematic area of the relation of certain elements of feminist theory to some of the central conceptions of Marxism. The engagement with the women's movement also, of course, is an engagement in institutional struggle and social mores, something that can be all too readily forgotten, even now, in the traditional intellectual groupings of the left.⁸

5 Clark 1973a; Clark 1973b; Rosenthal 1914; a work remarkable for its social-historical sources. I am told that Rosenthal became a member of the PCF, but his other works are often more anecdotal than this one.

6 Hadjinicolaou 1978.

7 It is not easy to list names and works here without over-selectiveness, so I refrain.

8 At a recent symposium on labour history Prof. Hobsbawm made it all too clear that he sees women as an unwelcome intrusion in history. See Hobsbawm 1978 for a really negative 'contribution' of a historian to the history of art, and cf. Agulhon below.

Another way in which a new art history is being built is in the work of historians, for example in the recent work of Maurice Agulhon on the image of the French Republic or the research done on the Revolutionary Fêtes in France by some of the *Annales* historians⁹ – the examples could be multiplied. Also the theorisation of art practice and education by artists like Terry Atkinson shows that art history need be neither the preserve of narrow professionals nor of gentlemanly amateurs. His contribution to the ‘State of British Art’ symposium seems to me to be an important elaboration of the historical meaning of the ideology of studio practice, in present-day dominant modes of art education.¹⁰

So, not only could we draw up a long list of articles and books of the last decade that indicate a shift away from the suffocation of traditional art history, but we can see that there is very widespread interest in these developments among wide groupings of intellectuals. Clearly their reasons for interest vary, and a certain type of Marxian theorising has become a stock in trade of conservative academic departments and a clerical activity in its own right. However ‘Art and Society Workshop’ of History Workshop has drawn well over 200 people to each of its two conferences – even if it is by no means sure what to do with them – and SEFT [Society for Education in Film and Television] schools on politics and culture, discussions of radical art-practice (such as a recent symposium on the film *The Song of the Shirt* at the ICA [Institute of Contemporary Art]), etc. etc. are also thronged with people. These are a few and arbitrary examples, there are many more, and yet – how is all this manifested in the exhibitions and conferences mounted by the business/state/university establishment? The problem is that they are hardly felt at all: and this also is an international problem, it is as true for the Post-Impressionism as for the Abstraction, Courbet, Second Empire, Paris-London-Berlin-Moscow, Monet, Viollet Leduc, Columbian gold, Tut-ankh-amun or Captain Cook shows – some of which, indeed, are trekked from one country or one continent to another. These shows, and their catalogues as well as the work, lecturing and reviews that surround them, are, as I have suggested, like a programmatic exclusion of what we, as Marxist historians, are trying to do, and process people away from the understanding of culture that they desire.

Possibly, then, when Hadjinicolaou says that art history is a discipline still in its infancy, he is missing an essential point about its historical formation as a discipline, about the formation of the intellectuals that make up its legions. It is not so much a matter of infancy, of some natural history of the discipline,

9 See Agulhon 1979b; Ozouf 1976 for example.

10 Atkinson 1978.

as of the actual role of its dominant tendency in validating and re-validating bourgeois conceptions of art and design both in philosophy and in the marketplace. This is a complex and contradictory process. But again, if Hadjinicolaou is right in thinking that art history is made up of a series of obstructions to its further, materialist development, then the criticism and destruction of these obstacles is not something to be accomplished all at once, in one book or in two. Much of what we do must start with a critique of one or another obstacle, criticism must be a permanent condition of our work, both in relation to old established obstacles and new ones that develop, or new types of the old.

Antal wrote his essay 'Remarks on the Method of Art History' in 1949, in the wake of the reception of his own *Florentine Painting*.¹¹ It is harshly critical of what he saw as the deterioration of the good traditions of the Warburg (for example), but in what it affirms it now looks very much like the greeting of a false dawn. Antal was clearly very anxious to look for what was promising and to be as inclusive as possible, and there were probably some profound political reasons for this – an interpretation in cultural terms, perhaps, of the Communist policies of a unity of democratic forces in opposition to the emergence of the cold war. But the extraordinary sophistication and importance of his own work stands in very marked contrast to some of the works that he hailed – Blunt's *Artistic Theory*, Gombrich's 'Botticelli's Mythologies', or Trevelyan's *Social History*.¹² (Antal was not to be able to see how Schapiro's early achievements were not to be followed through).¹³ Neither the Courtauld Institute under Blunt nor the Warburg under Gombrich can be seen to have played overall any progressive role in the constitution of an art history of the kind that Antal himself envisaged. On the contrary, they must be seen as the main institutional form of the obstructions to the development of this art history. Functioning on an axis between the non-contradictory pair of academic antiquarianism and the art market – the market in its broadest sense, that is to say, as the system of the ownership of art, they cannot but be conservative and, to a degree, slavish places.

This is something that we need to analyse – the role of art historians in society, the relation of their formation to the development of market forces as well as to broader intellectual movements, their methods of teaching and their location within different types of institution. I think that this would require some of the approach and methods of Bourdieu, but theorised on

11 F. Antal, in the *Burlington Magazine* of that year, republished in Antal 1966. Also Antal 1948, actually written between 1932–38.

12 Blunt 1940; Gombrich 1945; Trevelyan 1942.

13 Antal 1966.

the basis of a complex and comprehensive discussion of class formation and social conflicts.¹⁴ 'Thus there are historically formed specialised categories for the exercise of the intellectual function. They are formed in connection with all social groups, but especially in connection with the more important, and they undergo more extensive and complex elaboration in connection with the dominant social group'.¹⁵ To be able to specify our formation and historical role for ourselves – this would be invaluable in establishing our direction and in avoiding the apparently false hopes of Antal. Certainly some Marxist historians are more and more interested in such questions, and in art history this is also reflected in a number of papers and discussions of recent years – the last edition of *Histoire et Critique des Arts* (no. 9/10) contains a useful digest of such work. Some work done in the USA also seems to take on the problem of art history and the ownership of art, for instance the 1977 *Anti-Catalog* of the Rockefeller collection. I do not want to risk too many sober reminders of how little in the reception of Antal's work has, over more than thirty years, led to a fulfillment of his hopes. In an article of 1972 Kurt W. Forster outlined and analysed some aspects of this stasis and even now, after the greater achievements of the last seven years, it is all very much uphill.

Old Obstructions Live On & On

Two examples can illustrate the survival of obstructions, examples coming from the heart of the entire system of art historical education and publishing, and which therefore occupy an important space. First is Gombrich's new book, *The Sense of Order*,¹⁶ which enters the developing area of design history from the top, so as to speak, and will thus spread everywhere. The technique is typical of the inheritors of Popper's philosophy and Gombrich's own specific use of gestalt psychology, and consists in the admission of just sufficient historical material to show only the limits of its explanatory value. The primary emphasis is left with the appreciation of design or text within the narrowest possible of comparative terms; the analysis is given the illusion of depth by recourse to a psychological theory which is in fact a simple form of reductionism. Overtly based in a theory of human nature, covertly its principles are those of the cold

14 See Bourdieu & Darbel 1966, on the European art museums and their public. Or see Moulin 1967. It is the cumulative detail and methods of enquiry in these works that is of most interest.

15 Moulin 1967, p. 10.

16 Gombrich 1979.

war and anti-materialism. Of course the history of Popper's anti-historicism is the history of an attack on a phantom, parody of Marxism, largely of Popper's making, and accepted by his acolytes. Indeed the metaphysic that Popper and Gombrich propose is itself as crude as their bogey, an explanatory mechanism that ensures the exclusion of history from their writing. In the case of a writer like Watkin,¹⁷ the architectural 'historian', this becomes an openly right wing theoretical stance, and we should grasp the need for a full critique of this school – a critique of Gombrich, for example, that can undo some of the harm already done by *The Story of Art*, a critique that is both trenchant and potentially popular.

The second example I have chosen is one about which I feel less certain, in part because it would be ridiculous to say that a book like this, written by a non-Marxist, cannot *ipso facto* be any good. The book is Baxandall's *Painting and Experience*,¹⁸ and certainly it relates groups of material in a striking and effective way. But under its sophistication lies a relation of simple homologies between art and society, homologies that vanish ideology and class from artistic production, and hence the most central problems of Marxist cultural analysis. The book in fact occupies the space originally opened up by Antal, and I suspect that, within the present context of art history, it closes it up again and blocks the way to the further pursuit of Antal's goals.¹⁹ The point I wish to make is that the approach to materialism by historians within the traditional school may well be, can be an ambiguous and risky process.

Where Do We Come from and Where are We Going To?

But now, and I am looping the loop – because, I hope, the subject demands it – if we make such a critical programme, and begin to say some new things, why are we doing this, and for whom? Is it simply a re-entry to academe, a renewal of an introverted professionalism, or does it have a positive relation to the basic conflicts in our society? I would like to quote from Foucault, not because I believe that he constitutes some kind of model, but because he puts the problem of intellectual practice with a clarity and honesty that is sometimes lacking from Althusser etc., (although only Althusser claims to be a Marxist).

¹⁷ Watkin 1977.

¹⁸ Baxendall 1972.

¹⁹ Antal 1948; 1966.

But if the fight is directed against power, then all those on whom power is exercised to their detriment, all who find it intolerable, can begin the struggle on their own terrain, and on the basis of their proper activity (or passivity). Women, prisoners, conscripted soldiers, hospital patients and homosexuals, have now begun a specific struggle against the particularised power, the constraints and controls that are exerted over them. Such struggles are actually involved in the revolutionary movement to the degree that they are radical, uncompromising and non-reformist, and refuse any attempt at a new disposition of the same power with, at best, a change of masters.²⁰

Does this simple parallelism of struggles help us to solve the overall problem of our position inside our social structures, of our role in their hegemonic processes? Or does it simply elide the question of whom we speak to between classes as well as within classes, and return us to the now absolute autonomy of the superstructure, freed from any directly political criteria for our actions?

I want to put the question again now through a couple of crude stories, or images. They do return to politics, and I want to insist that it is they that are crude, and not me. The first has no element of comedy, and it concerns Professor Blunt. In the late twenties and thirties Blunt belonged to a section of the upper class young who were undergoing their formation as members of one or another of the organising strata of bourgeois society. For reasons that can be given they deviated from this role, and became agents of the International Communist Workers' Movement. In my view this was a most honourable role to play, and one that compares brightly with the hordes (un-named, that is) of their contemporaries from the same social class, who thought that Hitler and Mussolini were good blokes, good just because they kept the workers down and the reds at bay. Churchill, for instance, believed this, though he recognised them also as competitors and acted on that basis. Under the pressure of these

20 a) See *Histoire et Critique des Arts* no. 9/10. In fact some of the essays reprinted in it are American, but also there is work from England (John Tagg) and Germany (Klaus Herding), and a first part of a very lengthy Althusserian critique of Hadjinicolaou. See Werkmeister 1979.

b) *An Anti-Catalog* by the Catalog Committee of the Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, 1977. See also Duncan and Wallach 1978.

c) Forster 1972. Antal presents a problem in assessing the role of ancestors, as they, like ourselves, must be typified within history. A good example of how to do this can be found in a review of the Mediaeval volume of Schapiro's essays written by O.K. Werkmeister, in *Art Quarterly*, 2 (Spring 1979).

difficult and dangerous lives the 'traitors', the five men (and others) of Mr. Boyle's factitious and meretricious book,²¹ acted in such a way that it has been possible to make fiction out of them to serve the present war hysteria and the Thatcherite purging of ruling class ranks. Whatever his subsequent positions, Professor Blunt's example is important for us, as a part of the problematic relation between different fields of activity that Foucault so skillfully outlines. I am not proposing that we should all become spies – indeed one of the crucial problems of today is that there is probably no-one to spy for, there is a political hiatus that did not exist in 1939 – I am only putting this question: should the Marxist history of art be the most important thing for the art historian who is also a Marxist?

The second image is that of traditional art history, it is a quotation from a well known book, and you will doubtless guess what it is as you hear it. It also keeps us close to politics in all our complex situations:

We must not forget here, as our eighth element in the situation, that there are large parts of the world where artists are forbidden to explore alternatives. The theories of Marxism as they are interpreted in Russia regard all the experimentation of twentieth-century art as a mere symptom of the decay of capitalist society. The symptom of a healthy communist society is an art that celebrates the joys of productive work by painting cheerful tractor drivers or sturdy miners. Naturally this attempt to control the arts from above has made us all aware of the real blessings we owe to our freedom. It has also, unfortunately, drawn the arts into the political arena and turned them into a weapon in the Cold War. Official sponsorship of extremist rebels in the Western camp might not have been so eager had it not been for the opportunity to drive home this very real contrast between a free society and a dictatorship.

Here we come to the ninth element in the new situation. There is indeed a lesson to be drawn from the contrast between the drab uniformity of totalitarian countries and the gay variety of a free society. Everybody who watches the contemporary scene with sympathy and understanding must acknowledge that even the eagerness of the public for novelty and its responsiveness to the whims of fashion adds zest to our lives. It has stimulated inventiveness and an adventurous gaiety in art and design for which the older generation may well envy the young. We may sometimes be tempted to dismiss the latest success in abstract paintings as 'pleasant

21 Boyle 1979.

curtain material', but we should not forget how exhilarating the rich and varied curtain materials have become in the last fifteen years through the stimulus of these abstract experiments. The new tolerance, the readiness of critics and manufacturers to give new ideas and new colour combinations a chance, has certainly enriched our surroundings, and even the rapid turnover of fashions contributes to the fun. It is in this spirit, I believe, that many young people look at what they feel to be the art of their own time without worrying over-much about the mystical obscurities contained in the preface to the exhibition catalogue. This is as it should be. Provided the enjoyment is genuine we can be glad if some ballast is being discarded.²²

You cannot say that I have been unfair to Prof. Gombrich – this is, of course, from *The Story of Art*, from the 1965 postscript. In fact you can see, it's quite as easy to get a knighthood in art history as it is to lose one!

22 Gombrich 1966.

Marx' Clarkism

C'est toujours la même histoire
J'ose à peine vous en parler
Moi j'ai fait semblant d'y croire
Faites semblant de m'écouter

H. CONTET

[It's always the same story / I hardly dare to speak to you of it / I have pretended to believe it / Pretend now to listen to me]



In Chapter 1 of *The Painting of Modern Life*,¹ T.J. Clark embarks on a complex account of the restructuring of the city of Paris under the Second Empire. He suggests that one outcome of Haussmann's work in the transformation of social relations was the evolution of a set of typical images and signs that articulate the appearance of the city with the possibility of representing class. If these signs combine pleasure with uncertainty and displacement, their deployment more often than not effaces or veils direct social meaning, and this dual unfixity itself signals modernity in painting. However the chapter concludes with an in-text footnote – one of only five in the book – that calls for special attention. It opens like this:

This last page or so of descriptions is not meant, incidentally, to amount to a judgement of the relative merit of the pictures passed in review (still less to insinuate such a judgement without daring to state it out loud). The Caillebotte [*Pont de l'Europe*, 1876] is in my view a lesser painting than the Degas [*Place de la Concorde*, c. 1873], however much I may sympathise with its thoughtfulness. The requisite clichés are brought on stage a bit less glibly, but that does not save the picture from having the look of a

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1 Clark 1985.

rehearsal as opposed to a real performance. The value of a work of art cannot ultimately turn on the more or less of its subservience to ideology.²

c rightly wishes to deny a wholly 'aesthetic' approach to works of art, while holding open the question of the importance of quality and intensity, though he says that the relation between these alternatives is 'not clear'. But it is worth noting that the judgment he *does* make in this passage is not one to cause panic in Bond Street, and that the way of attributing 'intensity' and ideological 'subservience' to 'pictures' is historically confusing. It is also worth registering the presence of C's authorial 'I' and the powerful desire to pass judgment not only on the quality of works of art, but also on the value of historical evidence. This is encountered throughout the work. The effect of the tendencies observed in this paragraph is that Clark is constrained within a pragmatic aestheticising of history that precludes the aim of an historical sociology or semiology of art. As a result, *The Painting of Modern Life* has much in common with such apparently discrepant texts as N. Bryson's *Word and Image* and J. Berger's *Success and Failure of Picasso*.³

This might seem surprising, for c does propose an overall theoretical framework for his history of Impressionism. He refers us to Guy Debord's *La Société du Spectacle* and to his notion of 'spectacle' as 'capital made visible'.⁴ For c, then, the same historical process that turns the (capital) city into spectacle, also produces the petite-bourgeoisie, the Janus-like 'shifter' of social class, as its most characteristic social symptom. It is this class, in its capacity as the subject of the spectacle, that becomes the condition for Manet's urban genre and for urban and suburban imagery in Impressionism. The condition, that is, for their flatness, their belief in appearances and hence, also, for their acceptance of uncertainty. In Impressionism modernity is the registration of the inchoate and uncompleted nature of the signs that it represents – the café, the prostitute, the boulevard and the suburb, the *partie de campagne*. Yet, as we have already suggested, c is not led to any unconventional judgments on the status of modern art, nor, indeed, to set received judgments aside. On the contrary, the one spectacle of modern capitalism of which he refuses any criticism is the museum form of avant-garde art itself as a source of cultural value, or as the object of specialised attentions, whether from the historian, the dealer, the critic, the collector or the politician. Moreover, it must be assumed that this is

2 Clark 1985, p. 78.

3 Bryson 1981; Berger 1965.

4 Debord 1994.

a choice. For if he does, in the end, refer to White and White's work on the speculative, dealer-controlled art market of the 1880s, this knowledge is not integrated into his approach.⁵ Otherwise the material conditions of artistic production and distribution, and of the consequent formation of movement and style, nowhere inform the analysis of historically possible meaning. Rather, C's tactic in differentiating his text from traditional art history, is to shift the focus of attention from meaning to reading. This is in keeping with his earlier work and with a perfectly proper emphasis on reception as the process of the production of meaning. It is in itself a basic convention of the social history of art since Rosenthal at least.⁶ While for C it pushes the task of historical criticism from the elaboration of formal and thematic materials, to an attempt to grasp both how these might have been understood, and what languages inform an understanding of them, in the end, as a tactic, it questions the status of neither of these principal terms of reference. C does not see meaning as unified, monolithic and inherent in the work of art, but he does tend to represent reading as immanent meaning. And, in the end, this too is monolithic, as there is always one reading more correct than the others – Ravenel's commentary on *Olympia*, for example.

Or, the book is a traditional art historical lineage of great artists, at odds with their society, misrecognised and misunderstood. And when recognition does come, it is not just from the odd contemporary critic or collector, from Roger Fry or from the MOMA, but from radical art history itself. Indeed, *The Painting of Modern Life* contains a genealogy of recognition that begins with Schapiro's comments on Impressionism as a representation of bourgeois leisure ('On the Nature of Abstract Art', 1937) and ends right here.⁷ We will come back to what it excludes at various points throughout this review. It is just as well at this point to take issue with Françoise Cachin and her witty, often accurate but wholly conservative account of C in the *New York Review of Books* (30 May 1985).⁸ Cachin is very precise in outlining the weaknesses in C's text, for instance the way in which his apparent loathing of the commodity, rationalised by Debord, overdetermines much of his conception of urban culture, or his failure to appreciate the usage of certain words like 'ébéniste'. At the same time she is quite unable to detect some of the interesting subthemes that traverse it, such as his concern with money, and she is needlessly alarmed at the absence of biographical framework. However, she tries to represent C as a Marxist whose

5 White and White 1965, p. 261.

6 Rosenthal 1914.

7 See Schapiro 1978a, pp. 185–211.

8 Cachin 1985, p. 4.

own love of art – even – is perverted by his need to provide a social explication. In imagining C's self-repression she is able to express her fear of social history as such. However, although we will here agree that *The Painting of Modern Life* does manifest the kind of conflict that she perceives, it actually works in the opposite direction. Rather it is social history that is pulled into shape to serve the history of art. c permits no derogation from the central authority of the masterpiece in his discourse, and it is as well for conservative art historians to recognise this, and to adopt the book as their own. What follows here is a series of academic sketches designed to illustrate this assertion.

The City

C's use of both contemporary and nineteenth-century sources is continually elliptical, both in the sense that he is highly selective in what he takes from them, and in the way in which he only partially acknowledges the debates that usually surround them. Very often the implication of a reference in one of the copious footnotes suggests problems that the main text represses, such as his decision to use sources from English social history as the exclusive basis for an explanation of patterns of lower-middle-class leisure in Paris.⁹ But the problem is nowhere more striking than in the deployment of Jeanne Gaillard's *Paris la Ville* and Jacques Rougerie's *Paris Libre* to substantiate Debord (we discuss Gaillard only).¹⁰ Gaillard's work is a long and complex *chef d'oeuvre* of urban demography, of nearly 700 pages in length. It forms one of the parameters for any discussion of the composition of different social classes in Paris throughout the Second Empire, yet it is hesitant in its conclusions and presents no general political or theoretical overview. However, at various points it does suggest, tentatively, that certain fundamental processes are unfolding. c actually makes rather few references to specific passages in the book, though when he does so, he is careful to make them fit his thesis. So, those pages where Gaillard deals with the department stores in terms of a change from an introverted to an extroverted city turn out to prove Debord's thesis on the transformation of daily life into spectacle.¹¹ She, however, nowhere suggests that the 'commodity' itself has undergone any radical transformation in its basic economic form, although this would seem to be prerequisite to the argument. Here, then, theoretical

9 Clark 1985, p. 309 n.

10 Gaillard 1977; Rougerie 1971.

11 Gaillard 1997, pp. 525–30.

weaknesses in Debord's economics are assimilated by c directly. And Gaillard is always careful to stress the long-term and uneven nature of development, allowing for the rather gradual replacement of an older, less visible form of shopping by a more public one. As when she writes that, 'the quarrel of Grand-magasin and boutique, which will become a given of Parisian life takes on a dramatic form *only at times of [economic] crisis*'.¹² Haussmannisation is but a particular, if hugely important, phase in a long-drawn-out process. If we were to investigate its effect on the material forms of cultural production and the ways in which artists were positioned to perceive it, the enterprise would necessarily have to proceed quite differently to C's imprecise generalisations, which are constructed to hold the imprint of his conception of 'modernity'.

This is nowhere more apparent than in his thesis that literary texts evidence a desire for the completion of Haussmannisation,¹³ and a longing for the provision of a finally coherent image of the city. It is the lack of such an image that gives rise to its exaggerated fantasisation in writers like Victor Fournel and the Brothers Goncourt. (The use of these last as the authoritative source in *The Painting of Modern Life* suspends belief in the newness of C's enterprise). In a crucial passage he compares an entry from the Goncourt Journal of 18 November 1860 with its published form of 1891.¹⁴ And, although he draws support from the comparison for the fantasy-fulfilment thesis, he does not notice that, really, their grammar does not bear him out. In 1860, 'our Paris is passing away. Its passing is not material, but moral'. In 1891, 'My Paris is passing away. If it is passing in material terms, it is passing in terms of morality'. That is, in both cases, the Goncourt text evades a transitive judgment of precisely the kind that c wishes to make. Possibly the brothers realised that Haussmannisation was itself an effect or a symptom, and rightly sought a disjunction between the 'material' and the 'moral' so as not to produce too simple a relation. Be that as it may, if c does sometimes begin to unpick a text, in the main he refuses a discussion of its origins and its relations to other types of material.

For instance, opposition to Haussmannisation is allowed to speak through the character Genevoix in Sardou's play *Maison Neuve* of 1866. Why Sardou should, as a single theatrical source, be elicited from the literally hundreds of vaudevilles and plays on Paris topics is not made clear. Nor why a theatre piece written in 1866 should have more meaning than one written a decade or more earlier and played and revived continuously – d'Ennery's *Savetier de*

12 Gaillard 1997, p. 540, my italics.

13 Clark 1985, introduced p. 33.

14 Clark 1985, pp. 34–5.

la Rue Quincampoix, to take one random example from the British Library catalogue. Of course, it is easy to fuss in this way, but the question needs nagging over. For if *The Painting of Modern Life* is richly documented – almost to excess – this documentation is nowhere systematic. And at no point can it take a direction that will move away from Manet into an understanding of what those discourses and forms of material life are that constitute ‘Manet’ as a part of their historical process. The nineteenth-century easel painting remains the principal term of reference, just as it is seen as such in the international auction houses and museums of modern art.

Take once again, for example, the reference to Victor Fournel’s *Paris Nouveau et Paris Futur* (1865), where c wishes further to underline the fantasy/fulfilment thesis through contemporary perceptions of Haussmann’s military objectives:

It should not surprise us that Fournel’s little book begins with the passage from Hugo on the chequerboard, and ends with the author’s own dream of the Capital in 1865, swollen to the size of the Seine Departement, totally rectilinear, with the centre taken up by an impenetrable barracks, as big as a city in its own right.¹⁵

This is more or less all we get by way of commentary on Fournel’s writing. It might be possible to overlook the fact that his *Paris Futur* was to be entirely *circular*, with each of its centrally oriented segments codified in terms of specific functions of city life – monuments, tourism, work, lodgings, etc., etc. But curiously this great taxonomic formula that Fournel imagined, with its circular and radial avenues, offers c more help than he is willing to accept.

At last this great aim, pursued for so long, had been achieved: the aim of turning Paris into an object of luxury and curiosity rather than of use, a *city-exhibition* under glass.¹⁶

And at the same time it turned out to be more or less identical to the ground-plan of the Exposition Universelle of 1867 – itself a major intervention in the practice of industrial taxonomy, including the naming and fixing of class relations. As c permits us only a glance at Fournel, so he also allows just a glimpse of the Exposition, through the painter’s eyes, when chapter 2 reaches its objective in an analysis of Manet’s view from Chaillot. If, as c allows, ‘Haussmann’s

15 Clark 1985, pp. 40–1.

16 Fournel 1865, p. 236.

rebuilding obeyed various kinds of logic;¹⁷ it might be a good idea to look properly at these logics, and this comparison of Fournel's *Paris Futur* with Le Play's groundplan for the Exposition is intended to do no more than suggest the complexity of the relations this might entail. Staying with Fournel, it is worth, too, considering the complexity of his understanding of the modern. Whereas in *Paris Futur* the dystopic vision of the city is articulated through the application of bloated academic rules of order to its every detail, in *Paris Nouveau* a conservative academic discourse is the substance of his critique of Haussmann. This is evident, for example, in his objection to the use of the modern material, cast iron, in church architecture, especially in St. Augustin.¹⁸ As Fournel is also to appear as a critic of Manet, consideration of such issues might be a way of looking into problems of the modern on which C is silent, and lead us to an understanding of the representation of the phenomena of the capitalist city larger than one of uncertainties, displacements and wish fulfilments. This might in turn valorise the sources themselves as historically significant, even at the cost of depriving easel painting of its conventional power.

It is, of course, quite normal for an historian to synthesise a position from different kinds of source. But our argument with C is that his method proceeds by repeated synecdoche, and leads him ineluctably to a syncretic exegesis of the meaning of works of art. This effect is finely encapsulated in a discussion of van Gogh's *Outskirts of Paris* (1886),¹⁹ painted under the presiding viewpoint of Hugo and Zola. C comments:

But the picture he finally did of the *banlieue* is not a composite image, my network of possible points of reference is not meant to suggest it is. On the contrary the image he made is saved from merely belonging to one artistic banlieue or another by its very emptiness, and the literalness with which the signs of change are spelt out in it unobtrusively.²⁰

Now like the footnote we have already quoted, this is not an historical analysis, but a value judgment in its guise, and it deploys historical evidence to place Van Gogh at an artistically higher level than Raffaelli or Loir. It would be quite pointless to argue here that people ought not to make such judgments, but it is justifiable to complain that they have no place in social and semiotic investigations. For they derive directly from a system of values which history

17 Clark 1985, p. 41.

18 Fournel 1865, pp. 191 ff.

19 Clark 1985, p. 25.

20 Clark 1985, p. 25.

must dismantle to do its work. It is a small but telling symptom of the way in which c limits himself to historicised art criticism that he often uses the word 'story' to refer to a set of historical problems,²¹ for the word story itself suggests a commodity form of history.

Moreover, as c remarks in his introduction, this book has been a long time in the making, and it will have, to an extent, to be understood against the background of other developments in art historical and cultural studies. It may as well be said now that such an examination finds it seriously wanting, and these few pages on van Gogh indicate precisely how. For if c here produces an understanding of the artist's work that is largely a matter of content analysis plus 'art and its social context', Griselda Pollock, for example, has recently published a reading of van Gogh's meeting with the suburbs (of the Hague) that is more profound. Here, she confronts the limits of an historically formed artistic practice with a transformation of its traditional objects of representation, and discloses van Gogh's work as a set of signs at the site of this confrontation. The essay has a theoretical coherence that is missing from *The Painting of Modern Life*. Rather than adducing history as a meaning for van Gogh, the image is re-worked as a form of historical material or evidence that escapes C's aestheticising vision. For this reason 'Stark Encounters' is more likely to provide scholars and students with a starting point for the study of the representation of the new industrial suburb than C's text.²² It could also, perhaps, provide some access to another, rather earlier aspect of urbanism that c briefly touches on, and which seems to have possibly more importance for an understanding of landscape painting than he allows. That is, the transformation of inner city wastelands of the new arrondissements, like Buttes Chaumont and Montsouris, into real, ideal landscapes, by planners and gardeners rather than by artists. Again, this would overlap with other signs of urban modernity than those present in Manet, like an interest in fresh air. However, in a crucial passage (p. 48) the 'territory Manet takes to be Paris' and Haussmannian 'modernity' are definitively conflated.

Cafés and Prostitutes

It should be clear that our critique has two elements: one directed against the 'social history of art' as a neo-conservatism, and the other against C's

21 See e.g., Clark 1985, p. 273 n. 8.

22 Pollock 1983.

book as an exemplary instance of the way in which 'social art history' puts particular demands on historical material. It is suggested that these demands produce an eclectic and pragmatic use of evidence on the one hand, and theoretical inconsistency on the other. This, in fact, really helps to re-instate the propositional bases of art history that depends on individuals and lists of masterpieces, while complicating its terms of reference, and should not be seen as a development on, say, either a writer like Antal or an important essay like Schapiro's 'Courbet and Popular Imagery'.²³ It is also less effective than Baxandall's textual analysis, although this in turn lacks social depth. Up to now we have looked only at chapter 1 of *The Painting of Modern Life*, and we have still hardly touched the surface of the kinds of problems it throws up for the writing of cultural history. Inevitably, with so dense a text, even an elaborate and comprehensive criticism will tend to oversimplify. But, for all its density, the book is largely made up of speculative generalisations. If the broad social conditions for the acquisition of cultural values and of the formation of 'new social strata' are everywhere at issue, the detailed study of the middle- and lower-middle-class cognition of political and cultural ideas as a sociological phenomenon seems to be missing. But perhaps this is properly a different kind of academic work.

Although c has changed his view since his first essay on the *Bar*,²⁴ and no longer insists on the involuntary cultural anonymity of the bourgeoisie and the equally involuntary commodification of the barmaid herself as the poles of its appearance and meaning, the basic structure of the two pieces remains the same. That is, the *Bar* (1882) is explained in terms of a conception of café-concert culture derived almost exclusively from texts and documents dating from the late 1860s. This is a move that definitively scrambles the relation of conjuncture, continuity and disjuncture in historical analysis, and short-circuits a proper assessment of the earlier sources themselves, as they have to serve the Manet-exegetic objective. In the 1860s the café-concert was a developing form of urban culture struggling with rules and regulations designed, amongst other things, to protect the traditional theatre from their competition. One aspect of this, incidentally, was the application of fairly rigorous safety precautions in their construction, which probably meant that more, rather than less capital had to be invested in them. Like the *Expositions Universelles*, they were an integral aspect of the growth of the urban economy. (The Folies-Bergère itself was the first to ape the model of the theatre, opening in

23 Courbet 1978, pp. 67–71.

24 Clark 1977.

1869 with *fixed* seating, and its inauguration was delayed until the police had decided that it was a *café-concert* and not a theatre). The surveillance of the *cafés* as an *economic* activity presented the authorities with as many administrative problems as did the exercise of political and moral censorship over them. *c* is tempted to over-emphasise the political character of police attitudes to them because he does not see the way in which these are determined both by administrative impatience and dominant, caricatural discourses on popular life of the kind that he cites with Louis Veuillot. Discussing the 'Note sur les cafés-concerts' and the police crackdown on the *café-concerts*,²⁵ as well as other kinds of 'debit de boisson', after the Commune, he also pays too much attention to the censorship of songs uniquely for their political content.²⁶ For the 'Note' is concerned with a different question. Rather, the last two years of the Empire and the period of the Commune had shown that alternative use could be made of these social spaces for the directly political purposes of meetings and clubs, and it is fear of the songs as a sign of this process that now colours police attitudes to the use of *cafés*, inflecting it considerably from its routine conformity to the norms of censorship during the earlier 1860s.

There could be a number of reasons behind this misreading, other than trying to get to Manet. One could be that *c* is so intent to focus on the 'new social strata' and their *archi-symptom*, the '*calicot*' (although he has nothing to say of the '*petit-crevé*', who is related but more overtly a cultural sign) that he altogether misses out the Commune as a political and social event of some significance. Of significance that is, not only for the organisation of class relations in the city within the political and military framework of five years of martial law, but for the look of the city itself. From the end of May 1871, and for over a decade, the Boulevards were lined by the burnt-out stumps of monuments old and new – and that really did signal Haussmann's failure! Another reason could be the flattening-out effect of Debord's notion of the commodity on an understanding of 'contradiction in the real'. Now we can also see that it is a pity that *c* roots his understanding of the urban so narrowly in the post-Baudelairean ideas of G. Simmel and has not introduced the kind of perspective or debate on urban culture we find in Castells or Henri Lefebvre, for instance.²⁷ Here is Lefebvre on the problem, offering rather more than Debord, though from within the same area of interest. In Debord social contradiction

25 Clark 1985, p. 304 n. 10.

26 Ibid.

27 Simmel, 1976; Castells 1972; and Lefebvre 1972.

depends upon the individual act, perhaps to be discovered in the artist's work. For Lefebvre the contradictions of the capitalist city produce the site of conflict in a fashion that is both dynamic and reversible.

*The city and urban reality relate to use-value. Exchange value and the generalisation of the Commodity through industrialisation tend to destroy, as they force them into a position of subordination, both the city and the urban reality, which, however, become the refuge of use value and the germs of a future predominance and revaluation of use.*²⁸

It is also doubtful if it is best to use Louis Veuillot's *Odeurs de Paris* (1867) as a literal or a symptomatic guide to attitudes towards the café-concert. After all, Veuillot was a journalist who made a living out of his nasty, right-wing, ultra-montane mentality, and people must have bought his style as much for a good read as to take him entirely seriously. He confected his gaze on the popular out of available tropes and traditional revulsions, and was used to give a thumbnail sketch of the café-concert in other publications than Larousse, from which C quotes him. For instance, in Charles Constant's volume of theatrical law, *Code des Théâtres* (1875). And his readers must also have known that the *Odeurs de Paris* was meant to be seen in apposition to his *Le Parfum de Rome*, appreciating the joke, even if they did not hold with its politics. However, there are two comments, amongst others, that we can make on C's use of Veuillot. First, he is mistaken to tell us that Veuillot is boring and to spare us the remainder of his chapter on the café-concert.²⁹ For the remaining pages, on the Ba-Ta-Clan, confirm many of C's own views on the class structure of the café public, more precisely, indeed, than the passage on the Eldorado that he uses. However, if discussion of this could have led to a differential analysis of the cafés, it would have got us no nearer to Manet. Second, by the time that Degas came to do his Thérèse paintings, Veuillot's characterisation of her, pace Larousse, had fallen into desuetude. If she continued to do the 'Chanson du Chien' as in Degas' painting of 1875–7, in 1875 there was hardly a Parisian daily music critic who did not hail her as 'delicious' singing the role of Biscotte in Offenbach's *Geneviève de Brabant* at the Gaieté. And when the critic of *Le Reveil*, cited by C, expressed disappointment with her in 1886,³⁰ she was singing classic *social* songs like Jules Jouy's 'La Terre'. We could extend a consideration of the

²⁸ Lefebvre 1972, p. 14; Lefebvre's own italics.

²⁹ Clark 1985, p. 210.

³⁰ Clark 1985, p. 224.

Thérèse problem to C's handling of her relation to traditional left culture in the 1860s. Certainly, she and her songs appear as a sign in many kinds of political discourse. In a debate of the Commission Ouvrière of 1867 for instance, the quotation of one of her songs was made in a denunciation of public assistance. It was compared to the old songs of solidarity of 1848, and her image was used to attack dependence and slavishness in politics rather than in culture. But this would not get us from Thérèse to Manet's *Bar* which might not even figure in such a history. Even less so if we add the niggling points that the Folies-Bergère really was a theatre by 1880, and that the formal complexity of the painting can be iconographically explained. Going by the look of the lights – round globes *and* chandeliers – it is clear that Manet has combined the *salle de spectacle* with the 'jardin d'hiver', where the bars were to be found. The *salle* had no bar and curved walls, the *jardin* flat walls but bars. We do know, too, that Manet often enough entered into a witty pastische of journalistic imagery.

We will not comment on the chapter 'The Environs of Paris', where the Goncourts stroll their spleen and Monet looks now up and now down the river. Except first, to note that new work on urban ideologies of nature is shifting discussion into a longer term historical perspective and replacing C's literary approach by a more precise material basis, and, to wonder why the burning ruins of Haussmann's Paris are not seen as a significant absence from Impressionist painting? Absence is a useful notion, and C makes it central to the chapter on *Olympia*, 'Olympia's Choice'. The near complete lack of critical response to Manet's quotation from Titian is read as a key to the relation between his sexualised 'fille' and the academic nude. This is one of the more interesting passages in *The Painting of Modern Life*, but in truth C engages in absence analysis like a fort-da game without rules. In addition, and in a different sense, just as the use of Gaillard is very partial in chapter one, here too the complexities of the main recent French source are often absent. Alain Corbin's *Filles de Noce* is another dense and pathbreaking work,³¹ on nineteenth-century sexuality, and C rightly uses it to suggest ways in which critical reaction to *Olympia* was formulated within discourses on prostitution. But again, this is a path which, when once you step out on to it, leads rather away from Manet. How about, for a start, really characterising critics' discourse in terms of Corbin's basic categories? Are they for the regulation of prostitution, or for its abolition? Would this make a difference to how they see the painting? What does regulation mean in 1865 as distinct from its formation as a policy twenty

31 Corbin 1979.

years earlier? Without entering into such issues, c is condemned to speculative generality. But to do so would be to embark on a quite different task of historical explication.

Moreover, this overlaps with another theoretical problem. Having hastily condemned 'vulgar Marxism' as early as p. 6 in his book, c then confounds any possible notion of materialism through a rather opaque discussion of representation, followed by an account of ideology and an assessment of the meaning of 'class culture' that contradict each other. Clearly aware of this, and uncomfortable, he presses for a notion of class, albeit now a confused rather than a simple notion, to remain the ultimate determinant of the content of bourgeois culture. Now, in so far as this collapses the Marxist idea of class struggle as a 'motor force' of history into class as the content of historical situations and signs, we are really back to what I think c would still want to call 'vulgar Marxism'. But we are at one remove, because the conceptual universe of Debord's spectacle also requires the 'invasion' of the old by the new, the private by the public, the individual by the collective, that is, it requires a quasi-natural state for the commodity to invade and it is never explained what is invaded, at what stage and if it was better before. This is exactly the error that Lefebvre avoids in our above quotation. In C's book, then, the operations of class occur within a society hermetically isolated from the complexity of its historical evolution by having reached the stage of spectacularity. 'Spectacle' and spectacles become one and the same. It is interesting that c speaks of the petite bourgeoisie as the 'shifters' of bourgeois society, as this formulation coincides with Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto*, although it suggests an understanding of them refined by the use of a grammatical term from structural linguistics. The use of the term 'shifter', that is, at least implies a structural but dynamic or active role. Unhappily this potentially important development in its turn falls prey to the stasis of spectacle analysis, and the fact that not even this notion of class is *necessarily* pertinent to some of C's objects of attention. The development of the café as an administrative problem within the theatre industry would be an example, as would the censor's repression of songs belonging to an opposition politics that is not defined uniquely or fixedly in terms of class. c is committed not to perceive this because he will only look at the café as a conjuncture of class and spectacle.

However, to return to *Olympia*, C's argument leads him to just such an impasse. As he is lining up the repression of class difference in Haussmann's Paris in homology with the repression of sex in the academic nude, and sitting *Olympia* at the double infraction of these two repressions, the well-worked issue of the relation of class and gender should be in the foreground of discussion. In the end he plumps for, 'Reduced to its most simple form this chapter's

argument amounts to saying that the sign of class in *Olympia* was nakedness,³² having already stated, ‘and I shall end this chapter by arguing that class was the essence of *Olympia*’s modernity and lay behind the great scandal she provoked.’³³ Although the chapter as a whole is a finely tuned piece of writing – if not quite as fine as the original version – it remains difficult to see in what way the signification of class was repressed in the Second Empire so that its articulation could provoke a scandal.³⁴ On the contrary, even if the development of the city brought about an increasing physical separation of class, one tendency of social thinking was the taxonomisation of class, while working-class groupings, especially after the visit to the London exhibition of 1862 and the formation of the Paris branch of the International Working Men’s Association in 1864, elaborated their discourse on modes of class domination and salvation. And, as c points out, sexuality was everywhere subject to discourse, whether medical, prostitutional, aesthetic or touristic. The image of the fallen country or working girl often enough links the two through a representation of the prostitute. But, after relating contemporary attitudes on the necessity for prostitution,³⁵ c speaks of the knowledge to recognise a prostitute that men needed to have, and that respectable women could not but be disallowed.

Women must know nothing in order for men to know. It is striking that in Parent-Duchatelet’s best of all possible worlds, it is not only the client who can tell the difference, but any men, all men possess the categories, only some men will wish to possess what they contain.

This is an important insight, but taken at the centre of all the interesting sources that c uses in this chapter, it could just as well lead to the conclusion that what outraged in *Olympia* was precisely gender, rather than class. Because he takes the male critics’ response as the entirety of reception, c does not consider what it was that the middle- or upper-class *women* would see at the Salon. Not the image of a poor girl or the image of a girl’s poverty, but one of her sexuality. This could have presented men’s private knowledge and skill to women, and therein, perhaps, lay the painting’s infraction and the critics’ refusal to make sense of it. Possibly, if c thought of women as looking at art as well as men, this might have seemed a probability, for certainly it is inherent in the material of his argument if not its logic.

The role of visual imagery in engaging the male in an exercise of power and in the discipline of women is something that feminist art historians have dealt

32 Clark 1985, p. 146.

33 Clark 1985, p. 88.

34 For the original, see Clark 1978.

35 Clark 1985, p. 109.

with for some time, but C's footnotes and bibliography bear no traces of this development. In one footnote, he acknowledges Freud and Stephen Heath as theoretical sources for his discussion of disavowal in *Olympia* and in academic nudes,³⁶ but makes no mention, for example, of d'Eaubonne (*Histoire de l'Art et Lutte des Sexes*) Parker and Pollock (*Old Mistresses*), Laura Mulvey (*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*), Carol Duncan (*Virility and Domination*), nor for that matter of John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*.³⁷ All these would be more germane to the historical and sexual politics of the question than Heath's 'Difference',³⁸ which seems primarily a sign of his defection from Lacan. In this context, too, Luce Irigaray's work, not to mention de Beauvoir's, already covers the theoretical ground more richly.³⁹ Ironically C says in the footnote that his use of Heath has been 'partial and unadventurous', and this seems to be one point where indebtedness is so admitted. But it is also typical of his tendency to exclude any debates that could call into question the parameters of his approach and methods. The absence of a proper conspectus of urban theory, the exclusive attachment to Debord and Schapiro, the unproblematised inclusion of debates on leisure patterns in England, all testify to this, as do many other examples. This is to say, C's book in general refuses its indebtedness to work produced during or before its own long process of production. Its own facture, in this sense, is carefully glazed out, and it stands not only as a critique of modernity, but as a text that is anti-modernist to its methodological core. If one of the virtues of modernism has been the substitution of self-critique and reflection for self-assertion, the more the pity. It seems to be no chance that in *The Painting of Modern Life* the chapters are laid out in the archaic, essayistic form of 'argument – demonstration – proof', and that it reads more like Burke than like Barthes?

36 Clark 1985, p. 296 n. 142.

37 d'Eaubonne 1977; Parker Pollock 1981; Mulvey 1975; Duncan 1982; and Berger 1972.

38 Heath 1978.

39 Irigaray 1971; de Beauvoir 1962.

Carmenology*

At the Opéra-Comique, the *Carmen*, of M. Georges Bizet, left me indifferent and fatigued. The work is one of those where one can point to a virtue on every page, and also, on every page, regret the lack of inspiration. We know that M. Bizet has just been nominated as chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur ... 'How the devil will he wear his decoration?' asked one of his colleagues, the composer x, as he came out of the first night of *Carmen* ... How so? ... Damn me, you can wear a ribbon on a dress coat or evening coat, but not on a jacket.

L'Eclipse, 14 March 1875

• • •

This [Bizet's] music seems perfect to me. It approaches lightly, supplely, politely. It is amiable, it does not *sweat*. 'All good things are light, everything divine runs along on delicate feet': first principle of my aesthetics. This music is evil, refined, fatalistic: it is nonetheless popular – it has the refinement of a race, not an individual.

F. NIETZSCHE, *The Case of Wagner*¹

• •

Bizet's *Carmen* has been one of the most popular of all operas for over a century, the most performed and recorded, the most filmed, the most adapted.² It has

First published as 'Carmenology', *New Formations*, No. 5, 1988

* This chapter follows up some paragraphs in my essay 'Musical Moments', now republished in the present volume. I now find that characterisation of Carmen, written three years before the present text, inadequate, and here I follow a rather different argument. 'Carmenology' also forms part of a sequence on different words, images, and mythemes of Parisian culture in the years 1865–75, and recycles some materials in new combinations.

Four images have been omitted.

1 Nietzsche 2005, p. 234.

2 For a comprehensive list of everything to do with *Carmen*, from its first performance at the

naturally also been subjected to its fair share of critical and analytical attention. To venture into the field of Carmenology is to acquire for oneself a position in the terrain of the truly banal. For in the end it is as banal to try to say something interesting about some artwork, which whole industries are devoted to making interesting, as to affirm that you 'like' it or you don't. I know only one person who does not like *Carmen*. In which register is this something interesting to be put? Through a re-interpretation on the stage, in the manner of Peter Brook's misogynistic flight of fancy or Felsenstein's socialist realism? In the account of the first performances and the reception of the opera? Or in the psychoanalytical reading of the opera as a sexual text? Or through the elaboration of a particular kind of feminist critique? A recent work, Dominique Maingueneau's *Carmen*, attempts all these. And all add to the industry of *Carmen*'s history.³

Opéra-Comique on 3 March 1875, until 1980, see number 26 of *L'Avant Scène Opéra* (April–May 1980). The library at the Paris Opera House has a dossier on *Carmen* consisting of two large archive boxes of press cuttings and other materials from 1875, which is kept up to date. *L'Avant Scène*, therefore, contains no discussion of either Peter Brook's productions for the Bouffes du Nord, or of Rosi's film. A monumental collective work on Brook called *Brook* contains some idolatrous chapters on his *Carmen*. The booklet, produced jointly by the English National Opera and Covent Garden, is useful, and the programme for the current ENO production of *Carmen* is as lively an assemblage of materials as one might wish for. The most important recent work is: Maingueneau 1984. In addition Cardoze 1982 contains a stimulating discussion of Bizet's correspondence on the Commune in relation to *Carmen*. Otherwise in English see Curtis 1958 and Breiler 1970. In addition, Roy 1983. References from Wagner are here taken from the complete English edition of his written work, from 1890, and from Nietzsche from the 2005 Cambridge edition.

- 3 Most Bizet biographies and works on *Carmen* discuss the reception of the first night and, depending upon their reading, they cannot always make up their mind if it was a failure or not, some claiming that 38 performances in one year was a triumph, others that it was only kept running out of respect for Bizet. My own suggestions are based on a study of most of the press notices of that March, but I decided that a quantitative approach was rather fruitless, and I quote from very few of them. I feel it is a mistake to sift them for political positions by journal, or by musical tendency, when almost any one yields up a complex of overlapping questions; this is true of the critics who liked the opera as of those who did not, and it must be emphasised that many did. (My thanks to Anthony Hughes for assistance in this research.) Thus the issue of success v. failure is neither here nor there, except as a sign in other discourses. For a feminist reading see either Clément 1979 (the pages on *Carmen* are, unhappily, one of the more flat-footed and unhistorical sections in a generally pointed work) or Toril Moi in the ENO programme, who concludes that *Carmen* remains popular for men and women because of its ambivalences in gender role. Moi and Maingueneau adopt a psychoanalytical perspective. This produces something of a crisis in the latter's text, as it

Because we have become skilled at reading the critical reception of works of art as a means of getting at their 'original' meaning(s), it has become possible to construct some very complex readings of the relations between intentions, publics, public languages, and social/political discourses. Probably these sophisticated techniques of reading utterance as well as the unspoken, the lapsus and the uses, have neglected the elements both of institutional routine and of the random positionality of meaning that enter into critical activity. It is quite striking in reading the reviews of the first performance of *Carmen*, which taken in themselves do seem to constitute a scandal, how many of the basic elements of critical judgement could have been written of how many different operas from the late 1850s onwards. It is not just that many of the critics were the same men who had been writing nearly twenty years before, but that the basic form of standard judgements had been elaborated within a shared set of images. These could act either as accusations, affirmations, or indifferent comments, depending upon one's position within the critical field, a view of one's public or peers, and of the proper relations between them. There were columns where you could admit a weakness, and others where you might prefer to hide it and fulminate.

So, in musical criticism the important notions of an old school and a new school, loosely articulated around fine singing and melody at one extreme and 'Wagnerism' at the other, provided a common 'habitus'. Bringing together both a general idea of change and an expectation of a type of pleasure, fulfilled or frustrated, these lineages of innovation and conservation, and their possible exclusion the one of the other, define a critical space within which the professional ordering of pleasure could connect with more fluid elements of social process. For Bizet to be a musician whose music excluded Auber's tradition was, in 1875, a potentially more aggravating charge than it would have been in 1869. For Auber, for no other reason than that he died in that period, had become something of a musical martyr of the Commune. Nor could the elaboration of a fashionable exoticism escape the exotic's more *louche* connotations.⁴

leads him to the naturalising of historical meanings into the 'original' text as Bizet, Meilhac, and Halévy wrote it. In the end, psychoanalysis and historical investigation fail to converge in an understanding of *Carmen*'s polysemic success.

- 4 By far the most impressive recent formulation of these questions, which I came across while writing this piece, is to be found in Fulcher 1987. *Carmen* is an Opéra-Comique, and therefore falls into a different institutional arena to Fulcher's grand operas, but her general thesis still applies: 'the opera was inscribed in a network of references, of images, texts and even chansons – all of which interacted with the ambiguity of the political message in the institutional frame. It was not the music alone that created the meaning and hence the effect

It is important to register the complex relation of the music and the text, and the way in which they interact. Outside the field of professional musicology, and certainly in the most interesting recent writings on *Carmen*, opera is usually treated as text, as if it were its text alone that is the sole bearer of meaning. Yet an untrained listener is no less formed by the music than, for example, an untrained viewer by the look of a painting. We shall have to accommodate this fact, even without the technical means of description at our disposal.⁵

Looking to the musical writings of Bloch or Adorno probably offers a better starting point than some recent collections of musical semiotics,⁶ but this also opens up another difficult perspective on the relation of philosophy, music, and history. Philosophy seems, through a curious inversion, to provide a diachronic warp of ideation on which to weave smaller, synchronic historical studies. In this mode, Theodor Adorno's writings on Gustav Mahler are a remarkable analysis of musical form as philosophical practice, as is his short text on *Carmen*. His essay engages in an exploration of nature, sex, and fate as philosophical categories, rather than in an analysis of the opera as a specific moment in musical history, working through an exploration of the meaning of Nietzsche's commentary. At the same time it demonstrates how, in giving detailed attention to the sound and structure of the music, Adorno is able to suggest approaches to a historical understanding of *Carmen*'s hold that are more compelling than Maingueneau's more historically precise interpretation.

of the work, and neither was it simply the text.' In addition, Fulcher's extensive analysis of Auber's career, which lies at the heart of her book, backs up my own positions.

5 Neither Maingueneau nor Clément nor Moi even mention the music!

6 See Bloch 1985; Adorno 1976; Adorno 1982a, the 'Fantasia sopra *Carmen*' on pp. 59–72. It is dedicated to Thomas Mann, and glosses some of his ideas on music from *Doktor Faustus*. See Chatman, Eco and Klinkenberg 1979 for a section on music that looks rather like a set of simple formal analyses with new names for the parts. Much more interesting is *Semiotica*, no. 66 (1987). In particular, Baroni 1987: 'we consider as pertinent a selection and a hierarchy of musical formulas which have particular importance in the process of producing musical sense. Therefore, the first step in our analysis is the identification of these properties ... Unfortunately our discipline still lacks a deeply rooted theory and a sufficient corpus of generally accepted results in this area.' Baroni underlines also the problems of structural differences between musical and verbal languages (pp. 129–40). Hosokawa 1987 gives a discussion of the voice and 'sound/sense', concluding that the 'so-called totality of opera is in reality another name for its "syncreticity"' (pp. 140–53). Of course there are the diverse writings of Barthes on music and the voice, which are particularly germane to this discussion because they are so rooted in French pronunciation. See also Durant 1984 and the very interesting discussion in Born 1987.

For Maingueneau's deft elaboration of the Bohemian as a social and sexed Other is essentially a descriptive strategy that proposes how the Bohemian could articulate a potentially fearful fantasy of the infraction of the disciplines of labour and commodities in the France of 1875.⁷

For clearly, behind this social contraband [contradiction of social norms] we find the specific statute of the Bohemian people: situated at once on the outside and the inside of society, it is always in passage across the networks that this society weaves. In the manner of the proletariat, it 'camps' in the city (to use a famous nineteenth-century metaphor). But while the proletariat is fixed in a precise place in the economic apparatus, the mythic Bohemian circulates from one space to another.⁸

In Maingueneau, eventually, the opera, like the ring with which Don José tries to bind Carmen, restores order to the chaos of its opening wandering of passion. Adorno's more suggestive notion of the Bohemian as 'exogamous' opens out on to a tradition of yearning within the nineteenth-century culture of the exotic that is more complex in its ambivalence than, let us say, an effect of the 'dominant gaze', a unilateral product of metropolitan or colonial domination. Something more touched with a utopian quality of discontent or of fissure within 'civilised' society. Adorno allows for a rereading of a historical moment, rather than a simple deduction from it. The musical analysis precisely shows how the score refuses to allow such a definitive binding through its combination and overlapping of forms and structures, of ironies and dramas. This structuring, in Adorno's words, denies all sense. And it is perhaps in this lack of sense that *Carmen's* popularity begins to *make* sense. Its polysemy lies in its lack of meaning, in its infinite adaptability to its processes of reproduction, processes in which the original is only a term of reference.⁹ We will try to

7 He provides a wide and perceptive overview of the relation of the exotic cultural, sexual, and social meanings of Spain and Bohemia in France from the 1820s, but curiously has nothing to say about the precise moment of *Carmen*, the condition of the French state, the continuing existence of martial law, the language of reaction on the Commune. Cardoze, on the other hand, refuses to attach *Carmen* to its origins in Mérimée's novella of 1846 in any way at all. She (*sic*), he argues, can only be a daughter of the 1870s, and in particular represents the return of Bizet's own repressed knowledge of the massacres of the Communards, traced in his letters in a refusal even to see them. This then prevents Cardoze from seeing the way in which origins did signify in the process of *Carmen's* reception.

8 Maingueneau, p. 125. For another, more detailed analysis of the status of vagabond freedom in French culture at this moment see Ross 1987.

9 Generally, commentators – including Maingueneau – are obsessed with the original text and/or score, and their relation to Mérimée. I ignore this question, which is nonetheless

bracket *Carmen* between a yet more specific historical deciphering than does Maingueneau, and a generalisation that depends on philosophical musicology.

Anyway, of all the countless 'lovers' of the opera, it is certain that Nietzsche's love of *Carmen* counts for much more than a personal preference. It weighs quite heavily in the histories of philosophy, music, and nations, in the conceptualisation of the place of pleasure in culture. Unlike many of the first critics of *Carmen*, Nietzsche, who, after all, had years for his views to develop, found it to be an antidote to Wagner, and at the same time an alternative to the 'grand style'.

It builds, it organizes, it compiles: and in this sense it stands in contrast to the polypus in music, to the 'endless melody'. Have more painful, more tragic accents ever been heard on the stage before? And how are they obtained? Without grimaces! Without counterfeiting of any kind! Free from the lie of the grand style. In short: this music assumes that the listener is intelligent even as a musician, – thereby it is the opposite of Wagner, who, apart from everything else, was in any case the most *ill-mannered* genius on earth ... and how soothing is this Moorish dancing! How, for once, even our insatiability gets sated by its lascivious melancholy! – and finally love, love translated back into NATURE.

There is little doubt that this love grew out of his disenchantment with Wagner, and that he exploited it, even, in his philosophical vendetta. Certainly in 1888 his taste, if not the precise detail of his views, was perfectly conventional, an articulation of a commonly accepted evaluation of the opera. In emphasising its exoticism as a term in his own refusal of Northern cultures, he reinforced a position of impeccable conventionality, one only mildly contested in the sifting of Bizet's score for Spanish origins.¹⁰ His evaluation was one that some of

important. However, an interesting discussion on authenticity, which is essentially an attempt to recuperate *Carmen* for the institutional glory of the Opéra-Comique in the face of its international success, can be found in Ingelbrecht 1933. Ingelbrecht, who was a conductor, has a fully developed theory of the loss of 'aura' produced by the disc or the film. He wants to recuperate these operas for a socially privileged, hierarchical, and national notion of good singing.

- 10 A number of writers have tried to trace the precise outlines of 'Spanishness' in Bizet's score, and it seems to come down to a tune borrowed from Yradier and a Polo by the singer Malibran's father; see Laparra 1935. The idea of an essential 'Spanishness' is one that took some time to realise, in part to hold the opera at bay at the expense of its 'Frenchness', which was also an important stake in its historical fate. Today it is still found, for example,

those critics of 1875 had come to accept, wondering at their own earlier slip-up. That said, the difference between his judgements and their older ones is very striking. For many of them, on the contrary, whether they had liked the piece or not, had heard *Carmen* as decidedly Wagnerian, lacking in the grand style, ill-made and unfinished. (One of the possible implications of a *jacket*; 'unfinished' was a common term in art criticism.) It was not a French enough opera, even if what they felt to be French turned out to be the Italianisms of Auber, whose work had dominated the ideological edifice of the Théâtre Lyrique from the late 1820s to his death, as head of the Conservatoire, in May 1871.

Later, in 1928, Vincent d'Indy reckoned that *Carmen* had been corrupted by Jewish music, and called on Wagner's authority to show that in this respect it had been all too typical of the French school of its time. Forty years after the right-wing student demonstrations against *Lohengrin*, a French composer of the right could see the true French tradition as essentially Wagnerian.¹¹

In 1875 the critics could hardly have been swayed to attack Bizet as a Wagnerist simply because of the novelty of Wagner. A taste which had been fought for twenty years before by Baudelaire and the Princesse Metternich was rather controversial in a fresh way. Wagner had lampooned the French state and nation in a playlet about the siege and the Commune, called *A Capitulation*, and published in 1873. In terms reminiscent of the radical style of the critics of the Second Empire, like Henri Rochefort, he satirised the Government of National Defence and its recruitment of the Opera House for national glory. He sent up the French taste for the (Jewish) Offenbach, and his parody of the Marseillaise and Offenbach's operatic style sit cruelly together as a critique of post-imperial republicanism:

in the attribution of a special sympathy for the role of *Carmen* to Spanish contraltos – see the discography and interview with Berganza in *L'Avant Scène*. But the difference between two Spanish singers – say, Supervia in the 1930s and Berganza in the 1970s – can be as great as any simply in terms of period style and relations of singing technique to education and popular song. However, the whole issue is an important register of the desire to naturalise the work of art into an expressive origin. Mérimée's novella did not have to be seen as Spanish, as it articulated an openly metropolitan anthropology of another culture, bracketing the story in the learned study of gypsies and gypsy language.

- 11 D'Indy 1930. An extraordinary narrative of the anti-Wagner demonstrations can be found in the dossiers of the police surveillance of them: Paris, Archives of the Prefecture of Police (PPO), BA 1556. But see also Turbow 1984. Turbow discusses Wagner's position in Parisian musical and social life in the 1850s, when Fétis styled him the Courbet of music – a view quite the inverse of Baudelaire's. His reference to Padeloup parallels mine, though from different sources.

Chorus of the National Guard

Republic! Republic! Republic blic blic! Repubel Repubel Repubel blic blic!

But years before, in 1841, Wagner had sent up Auber as well:

Take Dumas and Auber; what trade do they ply now?

– They are bankers, frequent the bourse, and bore themselves to death at their own plays and operas. The one keeps mistresses, the other horses. If they're in need of money, they take the practised scissors of their talent, and snip a piece of opera from the gilt-edged security of their renown, just as any other capitalist cuts off his darling coupons. They send it to the theatre instead of the bank, and amuse themselves.

In so far as the new school tended to Wagnerism it too closely approached too many dangerous metaphors that haunted French political and cultural languages in the years of the Moral Order. If a critical hack dragged out the same terms to needle Bizet that he had found for Gounod in 1859, his review signified slightly more than the sclerosis of the institution of professional criticism, though to an extent that remains a fundamental condition of the production of critical positions. In 1876 the satirical journal *L'Eclipse* published the full text of Wagner's play, and demonstrations broke out at the Concerts Populaires of Jules Padeloup, when he tried to conduct some of the music of Wagner's *Ring*. Padeloup, who had championed Wagner in the 1860s, tried to calm the audience by playing some Weber, but it seemed that anything German was fated to be hissed.¹²

In its review of *Carmen* (11 March 1875) a leading music journal, *L'Art Musical*, started by expressing horror at the sound of castanets and Spanish entertainment before launching into a slightly hysterical attempt to link a total perception of social evil to the decline of the French school of Opéra-Comique. The style is reminiscent of Maxime Du Camp's anti-Communard master-work, *The Convulsions of Paris*:

It is now some time that the jokes of the apostles of the future have been going on. The head of this school, for school it is, M. Richard Wagner, has been expelled from our theatres and concert halls. Without the war which revealed this musician's feelings for us to our country, we would today

12 PPO, BA 911. Dossier on Padeloup.

have been overrun by those German trumpets that sound the death of Music ... Communard Music is, or at least we must hope so, worn down amongst us to its simplest expression.

But Wagner has left germs that are spread by overpraised musicians who denigrate true music:

Rossini, and they shout it aloud, was nothing but a vulgar manufacturer of cavatinas, Donizetti of cabalettas and Auber of songs.

The article goes on to attack an entire middle generation of composers (Gounod, Délibes, Mendelssohn, and others) whose work is said to have bored the public, and so put traditional institutions like the Opéra-Comique into financial crisis – a crisis from which a *succès de scandale* looks like the only way out. Oddly, the systematic rabidness of its opinions brings *L'Art Musical* into convergence with Wagner, and maybe a thread of anti-Semitism forms a link which turns the German into a secondary signifier. But it is striking, too, how in the parodied opinions of the Wagner school it is possible to trace an undercurrent of opposition, also shared with Wagner, not just to the music of an older school, but to its stranglehold on the commercial market – a dominance assured in the name of art. There was money at stake in the conflict of schools.

In the end *L'Art Musical* praised, even enjoyed, only those elements in the production that best fitted into other day-to-day codings of the exotic, of local colour and the picturesque – in a word, the set. From this position, a critic in *La Patrie* (8 March) could only designate *Carmen* a failure for the public to whom he spoke, and whom he constituted in the image of his position as a defender of the French.

One wonders, after this setback, if the young composer will not revert to his first manner, when he still wrote for the public. Or will he carry on down this new path along with five or six of his colleagues, who only write for their own little club and the twenty-four people who alone understand them. Why write like this for the Opéra-Comique – think of Mozart, Thomas, Massé, Boieldieu, Hérold, Auber, Halévy.

In the *Paris Journal* (6 March 1875) the critic Frédéric wrote:

Mlle. Galli-Marié [the first Carmen] has found the means to trivialise and to render the role of Carmen even more odious and abject than Mérimée had imagined her. She treats it with the brutal realist procedures

of M. Courbet, and has made this personage, who is otherwise uninteresting, into a sort of *nymph* from a low dive.

The name of Courbet evokes the Commune. After all, the Commune was not really over until the end of the trials and the revocation of martial law in 1875. Courbet in exile in Switzerland remained one of its spectres that haunted the press if only because the other institutions to which his work belonged continued to exist, and his exclusion from or access to them elaborated a debate in which the old arguments of the 1850s against realism were revived. At the same time the ambivalent meanings of *bohème* which circulated around the '*fille de bohème*' that was Carmen, and the memory of the café as the 'laboratory of revolution', overlapped with the actual surveillance of daily life, its inspection for every and any kind of social and political infraction. The very sight of a disorderly café, Lillas Pastia's fictional Spanish dive on the set of *Carmen*, was liable to conjugate with other languages than those of musical analysis. A list of café closures by the Paris police from April 1874 to the end of 1875 gives reasons that range from the holding of clandestine political meetings to danger to public health, from Napoleonic propaganda and insults to the officers of order to 'orgies and scandalous scenes'. More than one critic noted the use of the table at Lillas Pastia's, for sitting, as a prop for the feet, or for dancing.¹³

To implicate Bizet and his leading singer in this world was something of a reverse of values, a reverse that suggests the surplus of meaning in the day-to-day activities of the critical hack, and pointing to other kinds of transformation that bore on the habits and ideals of musical culture. For in the same review that is quoted above, and he was not alone amongst the critics in making such a comparison, Frédérick turned his attention to the lavish new production of Offenbach's patriotic and sentimental operetta, *Geneviève de Brabant*, at the Gaieté theatre. Frédérick had this to say of its leading singer, the great café-concert artiste of the Second Empire, Thérésa:

We did count on the intelligence of Thérésa, because we know her to be one of the most talented women to have emerged in our time, but never did we go so far as to suppose that she would have the taste, the

13 I have not gone into the question of dance as self-appropriation and assertion, which dates back to the origins of the can-can as a popular (male) activity, and goes on through the 1860s taking in the scandalous figures of Clodoche, Rigolboche, and finally Carpeaux's *La Danse* for the new Opera in 1869. See Gasnault 1986; Wagner 1986; Potts 1987. In *L'Avant Scène*, the article by Marie-Françoise Vieuille places dance at the centre of the *Carmen* scandal. Café closures from PPO, BA 94683.

tact and the measure that she has shown us in the role of Biscotte. But in this unexpected transformation she has lost nothing of her roundness, her liveliness and her communicative gaiety.

So while the populist harpy of the Alcazar passed into elegant repute, just as the café-concert itself was evolving into the music-hall theatre, the displaced image of street life on the chaste stage of the Opéra-Comique brought the operatic soprano into an unflattering light.¹⁴ Mérimée's heroine, barely passable on the printed page, was impossible on the stage. That a Bohemian from a *mauvais lieu* should stray into the Opéra-Comique was a social solecism, no more, no less.

And we must remark that the interpreter, Galli-Marié, has further exaggerated the stench. The actress's gestures sweat with vice and, sometimes harsh, her voice has something so trivial, so horribly repulsive about it, that you end up wanting to see nothing more of the performer, hear nothing more of the singer.

L'Art Musical

Styled as a siren of the crossroads, a free-thinker, a *fille* in the worst sense of the word, a man-eater who stacks up her options in a queue, who enters the action brandishing a knife and quits it only with one in her own heart, this poor literary image of a woman smuggler, of an exotic, wandering gypsy people, brings down on herself the whole edifice of epithets of the Commune as social disease, for all that only *L'Art Musical* actually pronounced the words *musique communarde*. The 'music of the future' could only underline the exteriority of the corruption from within. In photographs of Galli as Mignon and then as Carmen, we can get a glimpse of the shift from passivity to excitement that appeared so incongruous in an opera house where the domestic normality on stage was seen as an adjunct to the marriage markets that were made in the auditorium. She sweated vice.¹⁵

As I have suggested, the name Auber had also become a sign in the reactionary discourses on the Commune. For the composer, after decades at the summit of Parisian musical life, a manufacturer of 1820s-style Italian music as

14 The current craze of Thérésamania was instigated by J. Rancière and T.J. Clark in 1976–8 or so in their respective essays on popular song and Manet. See Rancière 1988 and Clark 1985. I took it up in 'Cultural Movement and the Paris Commune' and persist in a rather different interpretation. Cf. Marcus 1987.

15 See Lidsky 1970; Du Camp 1940; see 'No particular thing to mean', this volume.

social propriety made sound, had died during that May. He was still in his post as head of the conservatoire of music. He died unsung and unmourned because the Commune got in the way of a properly ceremonial funeral, and as far as the establishment could see, it had as good as killed him. In his place the Commune nominated Francisco Salvador Daniel, a radical of the reddest hue, a collaborator in the revolutionary press, advocate of a popular, working-class musical culture of choral singing, and fervent admirer of Thérèse. His life and death were such as to have left a potential trace of corruption in the discourse of the exotic spectacle. And more proof, if it was needed, of the link between radicalism in politics and culture and anti-nationalism.¹⁶ The contact of *Carmen* with the long-standing imagery of musical criticism was ruinous for critical language as much as for the opera, making criticism yield up so much more than the sometimes contentious differentiation of its proper objects, trapping it in the self-same realist error as Galli-Marié.

After all this, it comes as something of a shock to realise how banal an opera *Carmen* was, how much it is made up of stereotypes and clichés that clearly define its place in Parisian culture of the mid- to late nineteenth century. Its stereotypes are of a kind whose exposure in painting merits a little deft passage-work when manoeuvring around the academic painting of the Metropolitan Museum or the Musée d'Orsay, swift deconstruction rather than grand interpretation. Adorno notes the way in which the card scene follows the style of the '*faits divers*' columns of the popular press, that mingle the titivating, the scandalous, and the tragic. One of Carmen's companions sings a novelistic fantasy of a rich husband who dies, the other foresees a tale of amorous escape that parodies Carmen's own earlier temptation of José, 'là bas, là bas', replacing her unemotionally sensuous melody with a sprightly chirp. Carmen sees only her death, and sings it in a solemn, dark song of chant. Indeed the first night of the opera should have been, like the opera, sandwiched in the '*faits divers*' of the day, the favourite stories of the press such as the indisposition with a cold of all six tenors at the Opéra-Lyrique.

For at one level it does little more than enact a series of genre paintings of Spain, of a kind popular for nearly half a century at that time, and its

16 A historian of Arab music, he had taken the musical exoticism of a Félicien David out of the structures of academic propriety and written for an understanding of the Arab modes as a real but repressed connection between the popular art of antiquity and the present day. For him Moorish culture was more truth than spectacle, though he tried to make a living selling it as just that. Again crossovers of attitudes are partial and wayward. That Bizet resented Auber and his cronies is clear from his correspondence, as also is his sympathy for Auber's death. See Ganderax 1908, pp. 292–305.

performance could be seen as a charming little series of performatives, of actions that provide their own solo or choral captions as they unfold. The soldiers comment on the girls at the very beginning, Micaëla evokes an image of Don José's mother at home, the Toreador simply describes a bullfight in his aria, the dancing gypsies at the tavern describe gypsies dancing, Don José and Escamillo fighting describe their fight, the crowds at the end describe the procession of bullfighters. And so on. There is little to give the contemporary middle-class aesthetic sensibility reason to stray from the local colour or from the choral injunctions to enjoy it. Only, it jars a bit that Carmen uses the third person of herself; then the narration takes on a different load. Similarly, the more *pompier* tunes jar in their own way with the dramatic structuring of the score. Nietzsche is astute in noting the compilation at work in the score: this sometimes produces such a startling stasis of sense that we can begin to see how it can act in the parameters of modern culture.¹⁷ Not as nostalgia, like so much opera, but as one of the surviving armatures of what we call modern, a relentless juxtaposition of differences that overproduces other meanings.

The last scene of *Carmen* is like one of those thriller stories where the murderer commits her deed by means of her own suicide. It may sound a little like saying that 'women bring it on themselves' to suggest that Carmen sets Don José up for his execution, and maybe that was one of the stratagems that Meilhac and Halévy adopted in order to adapt Mérimée's novella for the stage of the Opéra-Comique. The original begins with José nearing the end of his story, which he tells before he is to die for his own crimes, and his tale leads round and back to the present. Because he is already at the end, and speaks in the first person, it is difficult to see him as being led on. In the opera, on the other hand, it is possible to imagine him led by the nose from the outset. And even if his actions – his military desertion and reluctant licentiousness – remain unforgivable, it is easy to feel sorry for him. Or it should have been, that is to say, from the viewpoint of a dominant familial morality, either in 1875 or today. The introduction of the sweetheart figure of Micaëla, the girl who tugs him unsuccessfully back to Mum, a foretaste of the telephonic summons that haunts drama and farce alike, sets the potential family as a loss against the adventure of freedom and erotic temptation.

However, even the best intentions can fail on the bitter terrain of words and images, sounds and places, and in the dreadful complexity of the overdetermin-

17 It is worth comparing the way in which Gounod's *Faust*, also contentious in its time, compiled sufficient similarities that the audience need never lose grip on its entertainment – four arias in twenty minutes at one point. Some of *Carmen*'s critics actually found the final scene boring.

ing of their meanings. In the end, in 1875 in Paris, a saved man could not quite be bought for the price of a damned woman, though he sang to her that she was damned because she would not be saved by him. It was easier to try to write a piece of good entertainment than it was to write one.

'Eh bien, damnée' [Ah yes, damned]: José's last words to Carmen, alive, should have been enough to restore tranquillity in the Salle Favart on 2 March 1875, especially as the hero assumes personal responsibility for her death. 'Vous pouvez m'arrêtez ... c'est moi qui l'ai tuée' [You can arrest me ... it's me that killed her] – as if anyone else could have been guilty, least of all the audience, who must have been too used to seeing women die on stage, in novels, or on the streets of Paris, to think of the event as something that they might have willed, or wished, or as other than normality itself.¹⁸ On the other hand, many of the critics noted that death on stage was more or less unknown there, at the Opéra-Comique, especially the death of a Bohemian lover of one and then of another man, and of how many others more? For according to her principles, there was no limit. And the Opéra-Comique was a well-defined arena in the marriage market of the well-born and correctly behaved, a place where an innocent young girl or boy would first see their intended at a distance, and then be introduced. It might have been difficult to find the Carmencita a decent burial even at the Opéra-Lyrique, where death was a more common occurrence.

The grammar, too, must have been difficult to take for the first audiences, this squandering of so many fine subjunctives on such squalid loves, the vertiginous shifting of the familiar '*tu*' and the formal '*vous*' that articulate the narrow line between propriety and intimacy. Confronting José with his knife, Escamillo calls him '*vous*' as a measure of the space between them. But as Carmen intervenes, it is upon her that he bestows a now courtly '*vous*' – 'My soul is ravished, Carmen, that it should be you who saves my life' – while his '*tu*' to José is frankly disdainful. At the same time the '*tu*' of Carmen and José is a measure of their history of sexual passion, even though her telling him to go in a strangely neutral musical phrase suggests the 'you' that is said to children. Before the bullfight itself, Carmen and Escamillo finally '*tutoye*' each other. And the shifting of person in the final scene, as Carmen presents herself now as subject, now as narrative – '*Carmen* has never lied' ... '*I* will never yield' – underlines the fatality of a history that is beyond its agent's control. These little rules of day-to-day speech are not often subject to comment, but their infraction

18 See Cardoze 1982 and Clément 1979, for the relationship of death on stage and social life in the stalls.

could not but be sensed. The very easy transition of *Carmen* to other cultures in other languages (Italian for London in 1878) is not so surprising.

The final musical phrases of *Carmen* don't let up, and with José's very last line – 'My Carmen, my adored Carmen' – project passion beyond the final act, mocking its end with sombre insistence. That alone may be reason enough for us to like the opera so much now, to have secured its popularity. Like so many other passages, melody and gesture run into such irresolvable conflict that it is hard not to be torn and charmed at the same time. After the death of either José or Escamillo has been prevented only by Carmen's intervention in their fight, and Micaëla has reappeared to take him home, José launches into one of the most tempting melodies in the score. But the violence of his refusal to leave, the violence with which he threatens Carmen through the melody, and the impasse of their impending fate, emerge neither through the words, nor the conclusion of the melody (it never reaches one), but through its even more violent contradiction by the orchestral chords. A declamation that might have been more heroically apt for the discovery of a new land, or the recognition of a new love, founders in its own excess.

Yet just a few moments before, Escamillo's account to José, whom he does not yet recognise, of Carmen's sexual freedom (on which he counts to satisfy his own 'mad love') has provoked the outburst with its delicate balance of words and tripping melody. After, there is a ridiculously domestic intervention from Micaëla – the opera is replete with sudden appearances and recognitions so dear to the serial novel, and probably learnt by Meilhac and Halévy as librettists for Offenbach's operettas. As José finally leaves to go to his dying mother, the music quietly transforms into a lyrical travel tune based on the Toreador's song. And the final act begins with the pure exotic genre to accompany the selling of oranges and the march of bullfighters. Each phase is bracketed, or sandwiched, by its opposite: melody by gesture, violence by soothing, attraction by repulsion. The central image of the cards of fortune-telling, the layering of chance on chance, of possibility on possibility, of banal pleasure on death, turns out to be at the heart of the musical structure, in a ceaseless layering of potential ironies. The score is thus an early example of the problematic we have come to designate as modernity. It may have lasted in part because modernism has shifted less than we might have thought, with its own re-imbrication into its 'pre-' in the form of its 'post-', and also because, at the same time, it is able to play a role in so many nationalisms, exoticisms, commercialisms, and avant-gardisms.

Bizet's Légion d'Honneur was agreed before the first performance of *Carmen* and announced the day after. Thirty-seven was not a bad age to get it, and Bizet had none of the makings of a misunderstood genius, accepting the honour

with due pleasure. Indeed, years before in his correspondence, he had noted that to refuse a ribbon was to side with 'Courbet the Communard'. He was no dandy, no ironist, no Manet at all, and he aimed to succeed with his operas. Like other musicians, he had had to fight out all kinds of negotiations with the critics over his works, such as *The Pearl Fishers* and *Djamileh*, without for that undergoing either the woes of exclusion, voluntary or otherwise, or the pleasures of a triumph. Like some of the elder opera writers of the French school (Gounod, for example), he had to sit tight and hope that one or two of the critics would rise from the inertia of their hack-work to project him in a favourable light. As it was, it was difficult to say what *Carmen* had been, other than the usual business of neither one thing nor the other.

That said, the very ambivalence of its position permitted it to figure in different cultural discourses of the future, ironically as what Wagner reserved for his own work, as the 'art-work of the future'. The one-thousandth performance of *Carmen*, on 23 December 1904, for example, saw no less an establishment newspaper than *Le Figaro* lay claim to it both for the future of an art for the people, and for the avant-garde of French historical culture. On the day of the performance, Gustave Charpentier, composer of *Louise* and composer to the popular universities, positioned *Carmen* at the origins of the art of everyday life, dealing with the loves of ordinary mortals overcome by their passion, the brutality of their human-ness – a high-flown version of 'boy meets girl', in short. The next day, also on the front page, Jean Richepin, Poet of the People, offered a half-amorous, half-reproachful ode to Paris for its neglect and its recognition of its true-born avant-garde, while in the social column the list of celebrities attending the event read like a roll-call of characters for *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. Elsewhere critics indulged in quite voyeuristically abandoned and prurient accounts of the Spanish dancing troupes now regularly hired for performances of the opera. For them it was anything but French; rather, the essential and lurid lure for a metropolitan society not as yet free to trample the objects of its fantasy under the boots of the tourist industries.

Somewhere in this complex a space was prepared for the essentialisms of our own time: for the slightly ludicrous skirt-hitching 'realism' of Francesco Rosi's tobacco-promo musical; for Peter Brook's stripped-down images of woman as earth, of earth as fate, and of woman as her own death-wish;¹⁹ for comic-strip versions for children that seem to go along with Brook; or for *Carmen Jones*. In

19 Anger with Brook's *Carmen* lies at the long-gone origins of this essay. His sexual politics are very specific, and he aims for a systematic elimination of the element of 'liberty' in the opera in favour of 'fate', the movement organised around the 'nature' of woman. He tries to eliminate the multiplicity of meaning. But in attaching this to 'primitive' society, he arrives

contrast, there is a rare detachment in Jean-Luc Godard's *Prénom Carmen*, a narrative driven by music – but not by Bizet's – that offers itself as a metaphor or an alternative to words or visual grammars. One brief snatch of the Toreador song is the single reference. It passes by, just as *Carmen* always does, with the inane everydayness of making meanings. Or money. Bizet's widow, who became Mme Strauss, could never have entered Proust's work as Mme Verdurin without the royalties.

at a new expression of racism. In footnote 5, I refer to the essays on him as idolatrous. He is credited with discovering the eroticism of the 'adoption of a horizontal position', for example.

History, Time and the Morphology of Critical Language, or Publicola's Choice

Probably one of the most problematic and least explored aspects of art criticism is the nature of its relation with art and to art's history. While it clearly does have something to do with art, and, indeed, is denoted in terms of this very something, it would be unwise to assume that this relation need necessarily be thought of as more than contingent, or, for that matter, that the history of art criticism itself is something more than the sum of a series of contingencies between which there is no essential isomorphism. Yet the history of art, in placing art at the centre of its own enterprise, requires that art criticism should share its special preoccupation, both as a discursive aid to or extension of its own procedures and as a specially privileged access to art's production of meanings. Yet even in this latter instance, if we were to take it as meaning that art criticism is a meaning produced by art, or for art (a subject produced within the scopic field of its object, for example, or a filling-in of meaning on an empty or indecipherable surface/mirror), we would still have to admit that the correspondence between the discourse and its particular utterances – between art criticism and the criticism of a given painting – cannot necessarily be fixed, and certainly not as the term of a singular and exclusive identity.

If, as a consequence, one must try to think of art criticism as differing from a criticism of an art-object, it becomes even more difficult to think of a means of theorising art criticism in a way that will try to define this relation as anything more than the determinable intersection of maybe radically different discursive series. Ironically, such a theoretical unframing of art criticism would then call for a purely pragmatic reading of its relation to art as a means of differentiating, rather than of integrating, the particularities of their respective historical development. The way in which the one provokes the other within the institutions of public writing, their particular and sometimes mutual effects on each other, might be understood as either incidental or central, rather depending on where or how the frame configures things. Thus the study of

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the critical reception of a work of art as a significant element in the assigning of meaning to it is not only just one operation amongst the many that are possible, but in itself has an unstable or equivocal status. The interest of such an operation may, then, lie as much in observing the way that it is required by the demands of a particular conception of art as an object of interpretation, as in any of the meanings that it manages to elaborate.¹

Of course the grounds of such a differentiation must themselves be historically complex and could not form the base for a pre-emptive strike against all and any referential meaning in art criticism. In the end these grounds will at the same time be those for establishing the nature, possibility and limits of reference, of 'being about'. Indeed it is the time-scales of its materials that is one of the most difficult things to settle in analysing the value of art criticism as a type of historical document. There are so many points of apparent crisis in its history, from Diderot writing about Vernet in 1767, to the reception of Ingres' *Saint-Symphorien* (1834) or Manet's *Olympia* (1867), that it is tempting to rest with such moments, test and exhaust them for the density of their signification of social process, rather than for their ability to signify.

One striking and important exception to this is Marian Hobson's important discussion of Diderot's use of the rococo technique of *papillotage* in his classic 'Salon' of 1767. Concentrating on the ways in which the critical text is made, making in turn a particular relation between nature and representation, Hobson is able to reveal unexpected continuities and disjunctions not only between the text and its object, but also between different critical texts. Thus while Diderot's engagement in the practice of a style that he condemns in painting is marked by a general, philosophical change in the relation of art and nature from being 'that of reference to that of replica', Diderot and his opponent Cochin share in their writing a mode of paying attention to the work of art as something that itself is made. As Hobson argues, aesthetic thinking itself forms a relation between the art-object as produced, made, seen and experienced as one that shifts around and through the languages of art as a system of representation.²

We must accept, then, that even the most dramatic turning point in the sociability of criticism turns on words and formulations that are already up and running: elliptical, rich in their inertia and unresponsiveness to the new: words to name a form, signal a historical reference, phrases of affection or abuse that are scarcely ever honed to suit one object or art form rather than

1 A key text in sustaining this mode of argument is Derrida 1978.

2 Hobson 1982; see chapter 1, 'Illusion and the Rococo'.

another.³ Or techniques of writing that might, as with Diderot, be deployed in an ironic *contre-sens*, producing a signifying tension between rhetorical form and indicated or avowed values and desires. It is out of this tension between a practice and the disavowal of its equivalent in painting that Diderot is able to open a space for Chardin, whose virtue precisely lies in his antinomic relation to this style. And while Diderot the *encyclopédiste* is in conscious control of the all-crucial notions of reality, experience or illusion that play around the understanding of the status and meaning of the work of art, this is neither necessarily nor even likely to be the case with an art critic either less centrally located in the philosophical thinking of the time or whose agenda is very different. If some of these languages and forms might themselves last a long time, mean different things to different writers or readers – age, social position, gender, class, all these have to be accounted for – then conditions of their utterance must be understood as continuous and inseparable factors of instability, neither identical with rhetorical form nor absent from it.

A popular theme in the history of art criticism is scandal, but a scandal in 1747 is hardly a scandal in 1869. Lafont de Saint-Yenne's views on the Salon of 1746, *Réflexions sur quelques causes de l'état présent de la peinture en France*⁴ (conventionally seen as the origin of French art criticism), belonged to a dissident fragment of a defined élite, and for that reason interacted crucially with the power structures of the *ancien régime*. In 1869 Eugène Vermersch's wry and cunning moralising of Carpeaux's *La Danse*, to take another scandal that has been especially well treated, came from a readily defined stratum of the radical Bohemia, but belonged to the world of a syndicated press.⁵ A scandal was mounted out of this press's need to fill so many columns of commentary and *faits divers* with tittle-tattle and amusement. A good story appeared all over the place to ensure sales rather than to express a morality. In one case we might well talk of a turning point, or at least a point of crisis where the fault lines of monarchical legitimacy become clear in a way that they were not in other parts of the mid-eighteenth-century social formation. In the other nothing happens at all, other than the instrumental use of morality as a journalistic sales pitch rather than as a mark of dissidence. Unless, that is, we want to read the Paris Commune back into a highly troped piece of professional journalism –

3 One might, for example, take the use of the word *épouvante* as subtly linking the criticism of Gothic architecture in Academic and classical theory over a period of nearly two centuries to the aesthetic acceptance of early romantic themes in salon painting. See below and also footnote 44.

4 See Becq 1984; for a discussion of this see especially vol. 2, p. 489 and pp. 516 ff.

5 The best documentation is in Wagner 1986.

just because Vermersch became a Communard. Neither the noise of the two occasions, nor their meanings, can easily be subsumed under a history of art criticism.

If there is a relatively constant factor, itself historically changing, it is the highly problematic status of art criticism in the French social formation, as both within and outside of official discourses and institutions, and, at the same time, having a position that depends upon the vicissitudes of the lives of significant critics, for example Diderot or Voltaire, who are writers of quite different kinds of text, of which their writings on art are only one aspect of their difference; or, a century later, Baudelaire and Sainte-Beuve or Charles Blanc. How accurately can we locate the dozens of other writers, other than within some generalised and inadequate notion of influence, or of an equally over-generalised currency of thinking and expression? Moreover, there is little reason to expect philosophic consistency within even a single author's writing, if the short-term aim of a text is a relative political positioning or getting the attention of the reading public. All the more, then, the relation of criticism to aesthetic and social theory must be thought of not only as elliptical but as one of different orders of practice to each other, both in the work of an individual and in the wider field of literary practices.

As Tom Crow, writing of the mid-eighteenth century, puts it in his *Painters and Public Life*, 'it would be naïve even to try to ascribe any encouragement of particular styles or themes in painting to a single, univocal class voice or political interest ... Nor need there be any automatic coincidence between private preferences and public decisions; a unity of "taste" can be posited on neither the collective nor the individual level'.⁶ Indeed, as Locquin long ago underlined, even so influential a public figure as d'Angivillier, committed to the production of the historical genre, was inclined to favour the officially despised Dutch landscape genre in his private collection.⁷ This discrepancy between orders of sociability, affectivity, taste and discourses is so productive in the representation of the experience of art in the eighteenth century that it generates norms and tropes not only to structure the aesthetic thinking of the revolutionary period, but also the critical language of the nineteenth century – when criticism is poised to enter the nascent mass press as one of its selling points.

It is useful to take just one instance of this kind of problem in order to situate us at a moment before the early nineteenth century. It concerns not a debate

⁶ Crow 1985, pp. 117–18.

⁷ Locquin 1912.

about art criticism, but a little, undeclared debate about the meaning of art. It takes place in two places, and at two times. First in L'An III, in the discussion at the *Jury des Arts*. François Gérard, a radical young painter from David's studio, declares that, because the language of art is the language of nature, painting is a universal language – 'ils [les arts] parlent à tous les hommes; leur langue n'est point conventionnelle, elle est celle de la nature, et part-tout elle est entendue' [they [the arts] speak to all men; their language is not conventional, it is that of nature, and it is understood everywhere].⁸ This is an important assertion for him, if we can construe importance from a set of rather summary, printed minutes. It seems to articulate the highly serious view he takes of his profession and enables him to reject the anti-nature degeneracy of the old Académies. Hardly surprising in 1795 when, in so many ways, the arts offer models of social progress and backsliding, framings of the images of nation and of people. Within the context of the *Jury*, and wider debates on art, we may be sure that Gérard also has an interest in invoking the supremacy of history painting as a universal value. And so the appeal to an ethically saturated concept of the natural as a validating source must be understood as a rhetorical manoeuvre that appropriates and opens the space of the universal precisely within an interested discourse.

At about the same time another member of the *Jury*, a little-known landscape painter, Neveu, is planning the courses in drawing for aspiring military engineers at the École Polytechnique. His interventions to the *Jury* are acute and practical, and even if he takes no issue with Gérard, he appears to hold a rather different view about the language of art when he expresses himself in the *Journal de l'École Polytechnique*.⁹ He has to justify its role in an educational practice appropriate to the work of an urgently functional institution, established to support the revolutionary war effort. For him it is part of 'l'utilité du dessin aux fonctions de l'ingénieur' that it is 'un langage universel' [the usefulness of drawing for the activities of an engineer lie in its being a universal language] capable of replacing the word through its often superior clarity. He too is pushing a professional position, the value of an expertise in looking, in training the hand and the mind of a battlefield engineer. Neveu, and we have

8 Procès Verbal, Jury des Arts, n.d., published according to the decrees of the 9 and 25 Brumaire, An II. This extends a footnote discussion in my article 'The Words of Art, The Artist's Status: Technique and Affectivity in France (1789–98)', *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1991), pp. 73–82 (Chapter 1.8 in the present volume).

9 *Journal de l'École Polytechnique*, Vol. III, Cahier 6. *Journal Polytechnique ou Bulletin du Travail fait à l'École Centrale des Travaux Publics* (Paris, Imprimerie de la République, then Imprimerie Impériale, Germinal An III).

no way of knowing what he thought of Gérard, suggests that the importance of art for engineers lies in the fact that the language of art is purely conventional. It is because it uses signs derived from nature, rather than because it imitates nature directly, that it can stake a claim to universality and hence to being a presence in, or a substitute for, other kinds of discourses.

What are we supposed to make of this difference between the two artists? It would be tempting to mount a number of arguments. For one, Gérard and Neveu are working from the experience of a deeply fissured practice of art. Landscape can by no means make the same claim for public universality as can history painting, even if the public prefer to look at it in increasingly large numbers at the Salons of the Revolutionary period. The accession of artists to official status has always involved an acknowledging of the relative value of their genre, so here, we might want to say, academic rites survive without the Académie. The artist practising the lower genre claims a more modest universal.

Or perhaps the two artists have a rather different understanding of the relation between academic aesthetics and the important developments in theoretical linguistics that mark the French Enlightenment. Gérard veers to a more Cartesian understanding of nature, Neveu's opinion derives from an alternative, empiricist mainstream worked out of Locke by Condillac.¹⁰ This is attractive, as it makes the pair themselves more interesting. But given the rather summary education of artists at this time, it is unlikely. Just as likely, there is really no philosophical difference of opinion between them that either might have noticed. What they have both got hold of is some bits of a discourse that is casual, banal, quotidian – an involuntary level of argument for a position, whatever the clarity of that position or unconsciousness of the frailty of its rhetoric.

Altogether less attractive, this latter option holds out the possibility of seeing that the relation between aesthetic words and art itself is highly conventional. The amount of meaning that can be made is necessarily limited by this conventionality, or rather the field of difference is restricted by the nature of usage or, in a broader sense, by rhetoric. Meaning may be generated by the way in which the rhetorical field itself is situated in relation to the object, so that two identical comments on a single painting, or a level of agreement that a painting is 'good' may mask, or be disarticulated by, the position of the overall rhetorical usage. Moreover, this fixing of the work of art as the only still point in a play of difference is bound to have some effect on the understanding of what art is.

10 For a discussion of Condillac's role in eighteenth-century aesthetics see Becq 1984, pp. 444–64. See also Rousseau 1986; Derrida 1990; De Condillac 1812.

Be this as it may, this set of suppositions, refusing art criticism its privilege or even its name, does enable us to loosen up some of the questions about its production of meanings, other than those that are teleologised by the need to re-avow art as its necessary or singular object. Indeed the adoption of such an approach is already a time-honoured stratagem in literary criticism and there seems to be no good reason why art criticism should miss out on the act of following 'this process by means of which "one sign gives birth to another"'.¹¹ What, then, I will try to lay out here is a way of reading a particular body of that which we will still call 'art criticism' in terms of its status as the repository of certain systems of rhetoric, and I will conclude by suggesting some of the problems that follow from this.

Take now the following phrases written around the Salon of 1806:

Cet ouvrage, comme on le voit par son titre, n'est pas circonscrit dans un spectacle du moment: il embrasse de plus vastes et sur-tout de plus utiles considérations.

[This work, as one can see from its title, is not circumscribed by a spectacle of the moment: it embraces more vast and more practical considerations.]

They come from the *Avant-propos* of one of the principal critical effusions of that event, P.-J.-B. Chaussard's *Le Pausanias français – Salon de 1806*, a massive volume, over 500 pages in length, that was brought out as a *feuilleton* during the period of the Salon.¹² The declared purpose of this foreword is, then, to re-present in the present – that is to say during the Paris Salon, which is precisely the 'spectacle of the moment' – what had been a journey round the

11 De Man 1979. My reading of the historicity of discourse owes much to this and other of de Man's essays and has benefitted enormously from discussions with Fred Orton and his students. I hope that its difference from the approach in Bryson 1984 (see p. 129 onwards for an alternative tropology of art practice) will be clear, as will its critical relation to chapter 1 of Foucault 1969. A remarkable, original and complex account of the temporal and narrative structures of the theoretical language and practices of art in France from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries may be found in Mitchell 1985.

12 Chaussard 1806, p. 5. I had wished to work *Le Pausanias français* against other of Chaussard's writings, in particular Chaussard 1799. These were then to be mapped against Landon's *Annales du musée* on the one hand and the Vaudeville style of Salon criticism on the other. This will be more substantially developed in my forthcoming *Staging an Artist, Ingres between Then and Now* (now Rifkin 2000).

geographical limits of the ancient world, as if this metaphoric delimitation of the Salon's space will frame or set the limits for the question 'Quel est à cette époque l'état des Arts du Dessin en France?' [What is the state of the arts of design in France in this period?]. It is to begin a new history, 'L'ouverture du Dix-Neuvième Siècle', in the textual space already completed by Pausanias for Greece, Vasari for Italy and Félibien for the centuries of François I and Louis XIV, each one an account resembling, in its own rhetorical structures of description and judgement, what is most desirable in the age that it represents. It will be like these.

The enterprise is not without its perils or its ironies. For if Pausanias's own text is 'un des plus précieux trésors de l'Antiquité' this in itself says little for either Antiquity or its distinguished successors. For the centuries of Pericles, Alexander, of the Medici, François I and Louis XIV all 'virent s'enflammer et s'éteindre et avec eux le flambeau des arts' [saw themselves ignite and put out and with them the torch of the arts]. The success of Chaussard's text will be to outlive its utility, the utility which consists only in offering up the space of a rhetorical repetition of previous texts whose survival is wholly dependent on the loss of their subject. The text that outlives its time lives as more complete than the mere artistic records of its time, as it is always an iteration of judgement made in a series of judgements whose temporality is not that of their separate subjects, but that transcends them. This transcendence, then, is in the repetition of rhetorically stable judgement whose repetition is also doubled by and representative of the cyclical rise and fall of civilisations and styles of art as the process of history. Each segment of the metaphoric chain (Pausanias – Vasari – Félibien) is taken metonymically in the place of what can now never be more than the representation of the series of their works of art. That is to say, those centuries that 'burned brightly, yet only to die down'. And, if the will to historicise thus becomes specifically atemporal, then it is inside the rhetoric of the historical/critical text that history is conserved and accumulated.

Indeed this notion of the conservation of historical time within the articulation of rhetorical systems can be evidenced at a number of discursive levels throughout Chaussard's Introduction. Literally, Renaissance Italy 'conserves ... some remains of the healthy doctrine' of Antiquity, by substitution – 'Eschyle dans Michel-Ange, Euripide dans Léonard de Vinci ...' [Aeschylus in Michelangelo, Euripides in Leonardo da Vinci ...].¹³ This allows a comparison to be made between the conditions of artistic production of the ancient and modern world,

13 Chaussard 1806, p. 24.

delimiting the possibility of progress in the dynamic of place, time and individual genius. Yet this comparison is one in which the value of material conditions as an explanation for artistic achievement must be subordinate to a trope of cycle and origin, which it is to substantiate. If the origin, Antiquity, remains the highest point, its repetition, in Renaissance Italy, is humbling for ourselves ... 'et lorsque par hasard, nous trouvons aujourd'hui la moindre pièce de leur armure, nous nous en couvrons tout entier' [and therefore if by chance, we find today any piece of their armour, we will cover ourselves all over with it].¹⁴ The only future for the present is to retrieve the position of the origin of the discourse that offers it up for a future. Antiquity, its status as origin bound up with its mode of imitating nature, becomes a second nature whose replication both accomplishes the repetition of a trope and the figuring of social progress in this repetition.¹⁵

The general mode of historical narrative recommended years before by Condillac and Mably, that of speeding up and slowing down, eliding and detailing, according to the worth of a given period, is carefully observed in the transition between the principal moments of civilisation.¹⁶ Perhaps, then, it is this narrative propriety which lends itself to the description of a present whose value is yet to be established. At each turn of the story the present is enabled as just another turn, its value invested in its potential as rhetorical space. The criticism of art, itself a purely synchronic act of rendering the spectacle, will map the potential for the historicity-as-rhetoric of its moment. Hence, criticism, as a form of discourse, is in this way distinct from history and art, and mediates between them. It will demonstrate the detail that gives the present its right to fill the space-time of historical narrative as ample, worthwhile and belonging to origin.

Yet this narrative device also coincides with the Academic convention of providing only correct models for imitation in the École des Beaux Arts and the Académie de France in Rome. As rhetoric it is fully implicated in the sys-

14 Ibid., p. 24.

15 In this respect Chaussard's writing belongs to the series of speculative histories and 'futurologies' that characterised the later 1790s and the Empire, such as Emeric-David's essay of 1805, *Recherches sur l'art statuaire considéré chez les anciens et les modernes; ou mémoire sur cette question proposée par l'Institut National de France. Quels ont été les causes de la perfection de la sculpture antique et quels seraient les moyens d'y atteindre?* (Paris, An XIII), and Joachim Le Breton's *Rapport sur les beaux arts* (Paris, 1810?).

16 *De la manière d'écrire l'histoire*, published separately under the name of both brothers, Bonnot de Condillac and Bonnot de Mably: confused publishing history, but see De Mably 1789.

tem which it takes to task. A shift in opinion on historical value tends to emerge not so much as a difference about the relation between history and the present, a reconstitution in principle of the present, but itself as a correct or incorrect handling of the language of judgement. History is thus itself doubly conserved, or both conserved and protected in differing interests. One of the most influential counter attacks on *Le Pausanias* first and foremost takes it to task for its wilful use of the trope of inversion – ‘ils ne sont partout qu’inversions inusitées, comme *paternel gouvernement, extraordinaires génies, septentrionales gothicités* ...’ [they are not however anything but unusual inversions, like *paternal government, extraordinary geniuses, northern gothicnesses* ...].¹⁷ This correction of Chaussard’s grammar takes priority over the somewhat competitive refutation of individual judgements and the satirical abuse of Chaussard’s masquerade as an antique sage. He was, after all, one of those little repentant men of ’93 who liked to dress up and adopt classical pseudonyms – Pausanias, Publicola. To mock his rhetoric was also to undermine his project.

All these considerations are useful in looking at a field of art-critical discourses in which the word ‘history’ plays such an important role in linking judgement to education and production through the genre of ‘history painting’. For if, as I have already suggested, there is no necessary link between art criticism and art through the word ‘art’, then, none the less, there are significant isomorphic elements in the way that ‘history’ operates as a trope in the rhetoric of art and of art criticism. For in both, the word ‘history’ functions to complete a rhetorical gesture through the insertion of their discourse in appropriate systems of knowledge. For art criticism it acts as the invocation of its already existing and completed relation to an epoch. For art it is the denoting of a space in a timeless hierarchy, or, rather, in a hierarchy of which the temporal specificity is not of its essence; that is to say, the Academic hierarchy of genres and source materials in a web of articulation within and between institutions of discourse and education, exhibition and commissioning. And, as it happens, Chaussard is still as virulently anti-Academic in 1806 as both he and the Baron-to-be Gérard had been back in 1793. Indeed this unevenness both links and disrupts the fields of art and art criticism, enabling us to map the modes of their overlapping and separation and to see more clearly how a structural isomorphism in rhetorical function does not implicate any systematic identity of meaning.

17 Deloynes, item 1054, *Journal de l’Empire* (1806). This and other Salon reviews below from Collection Deloynes, vols. XXXVII and XXXVIII, in the Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

The ordering of similar historical materials is differently figured as narrative and judgement in the practices of art and criticism, as well as in the sources on which they draw, such as histories of the ancient world, connoisseurs' books and numismatics. In a contemporary collection, Ennio Quirino Visconti's *Iconographie Grècque* of 1811, historical narrative establishes the archeologically and numismatically correct sequence of medals or coins in a connoisseurial discourse at the same time as it provides Napoléon Bonaparte with appropriate antecedents. The dating of coins itself is useful in telling accurately the rise and fall of dynasties together with accurate images of great men. Thirteen pages on the Seleucides, the kings of Syria, for instance, both yield up a variety of moral, political or military examples and give numismatics an historical interest in the present, a purpose for its taxonomies. Yet in the transposition of their materials for a painting or an opera through a common subject like *Antiochus and Stratonice*, they participate in the moral and narrative substance of an image or performance that have their own network of connections to Antiquity and to the present-day institutions of the production and consumption of art and music.¹⁸

And, at this point in time, when the demands made on historical narrative have been given a special interest by the construction of a new Imperial mythology, the reordering of the relation between the possible modes of historical representation and their rhetorical procedures renders it ever more unstable. Given that this instability, unlike that of the 1789–93 period, occurs within the formulation of a monolithic rather than a plural political discourse, more than one teleology is forced to look like another on the very site of their difference, and the flowing over, or overdetermination by each other, of historical rhetorics takes on a new configuration. It may be this, then, that can help to account for what seems very much a silence or uniformity in 1806, a block in meaning which forcibly, as Susan Siegfried has so ably demonstrated, has to be found outside the texts in the interlocking systems of political interests and artistic conflict.¹⁹ Yet it is worth persisting with Chaussard's stratagems and trying to tease out their historical and rhetorical conditions and conventions. Certainly he is caught in a divergence of interest between the movement of history that represents itself only in its fully completed records or relics and the need, on the one hand, to represent the beginning of an upward curve whose eventual

18 Even in Chaussard's own writing, for example, the speed with which he passes over ancient Rome as a source of judgement in the *Pausanias*, and the loving care that he devotes to it in his scandalous and titillating allegory *Héliogabale* (Chaussard 1798), suggests both the strains and adaptability of historical tropes.

19 Siegfried 1994.

downturn is already inscribed in his language and, on the other, to make free comparisons between the individual works of different epochs – comparisons that now enable individual agency to be inscribed in a historical cycle that is not of any agent's making.

To a certain extent this is simply a matter of ringing some variations in judgements of quality and historical weighting as a means of mounting opposition to an Academic discourse on the site of its own linguistic conventions. Thus Chaussard downgrades the role of Louis XIV, Le Brun and Mansard in the achievements of French art, shifting the myth of Poussin the marginal and the exile to the centre of attention.²⁰ It is despite the political and social structures of his time that Poussin shone, just as the age of the Médicis enjoyed such favourable conditions for the production of art that it could have existed without them. In blaming Perrault for the infelicity of coupling columns on the Louvre façade, Chaussard situates the artist within a system where individual choice is both possible and a source of merit or condemnation. He can introduce a sufficiency of distinctions around instances of artistic judgement, taste and choice of historical model (Palmyra rather than Athens by Perrault) that it becomes possible to make new judgements in the Salon within the limits of a dominant language, to make judgement critical. To occupy a radically different discursive site would have been to ironise those very conventions that Chaussard needed to appropriate, and, in so doing, to slip entirely out of the field of elevated discourse. And, of course, the Académie was the instrument of the Napoleonic project that Chaussard so approved.

This problem of address, of tone and speaking position, was to be found at its starkest in the Vaudeville style of Salon criticism – a genre that had grown in popularity from the middle of the previous century.²¹ In the *Observations critiques de M. Vautour sur l'exposition des tableaux de l'an 1806*, the 'writer', M. Lambin, trails his maid Julie around the Salon and expresses differences of opinion with his aunt Aurore. M. Lambin rises to the frisson of Girodet's *Deluge*, while his Aunt can only cry out 'Ah! m., quittons ce tableau, je crains

20 Chaussard 1806, p. 32.

21 I must here express my disagreement with Fort 1989. My assumption for both the earlier vaudeville pamphlets and those of the 1800s is that they represent an appropriation of an imaginary public voice within a system of critical discourse, thereby constructing a site of difference and a public to go with it – a public that is not so much going to overturn anything, but that is going to be able to amuse itself at the salon within the framework provided by official discourse. The importation of Bakhtinian models of carnival into a modern 'civilised' discourse makes more claims for difference in literary style than is needed to follow the meaning of the texts. See Bakhtin 1984.

mes attaques de nerfs' [Ah! M, let's leave this scene, I fear my nervous attacks].²² And even here, however intentionally ludicrous the tone, Aunt Aurore echoes a form of judgement that goes back to the *Mercure de France* on Vernet's *Storm*, that is central to the classical and Academic critique of the Gothic, and that is not far removed from Chaussard's own reservations.²³ In one of a number of pamphlets entitled *Arlequin au Muséum*, the eponymous narrator, accused of criticising only by means of puns and word games, gives vent to a farcical but deadly accurate account of the requirements of history painting, 'cet heureux phénix est encore à trouver' [this happy phoenix is still to be found].²⁴ Total dissolution of value is at the mercy of nothing more than improper allocution.

Yet the Vaudevilles and Arlequins joined voices with the 'serious' critics in unmitigated admiration around the spectacle of Bergeret's *Death of Raphael*. Raphael's death seemed to fill a space between genre and history, rhetoric and agency. Empathy with this other, crucial myth of origin was as readily compatible with the authority of history painting as with its farcical deconstruction. History painting's difficulty, its inability to meet the criteria of either past or present, for a moment worked as well for the one discourse as for the other. Salon criticism, we might then want to argue, could not at this point be more than a conflict of illo- and allo-cution. It is interesting to note that Chaussard's own writing is much less rich in comparison and metonymy of the different affective modes of art and music than it had been in 1798. Then, in his great, social allegory-reportage, *Le Nouveau Diable boiteux*, his writing on Gluck was closer to the representation of artistic expression than his criticism of 1806. The prior text is the 'nearer' to the criticism of the mid-nineteenth century, while in 1806 we seem to be a long way from a Romantic conception of art, even if art itself is already almost there. In works like Girodet's *Deluge* or his earlier *Ossian*, public allegory and pictorial image are hardly getting along quite as well as they might.

In 1806 the problem runs like this. For Chaussard to proceed to speak of individual works of art, he must first of all enmesh himself in an unperceived aporetic, which is the entrapment of historical narrative both in the repetition of a single rhetorical trope of repetition – the figure of universality – and in the interested judgement of his own time. 'Il faut parler à la raison et surtout à l'intérêt du lecteur' [it is necessary to speak to reason and above all in the interest of the reader].²⁵ And as we know all too well, reason and interest

22 Deloynes, item 1026, p. 11.

23 For the Vernet, see Hobson 1982, p. 48.

24 Deloynes, item 1029, p. 12.

25 Chaussard 1806, p. 5.

are not easily reconciled in the claim for universal values. Within only two of his thirty pages of preparatory discourse, Chaussard has already made his task impossible.

Chaussard's choice is, he would like us to believe, a 'more useful' thing to do than to allow oneself to be circumscribed by this 'spectacle of the moment'. But the approach to just this circumscription is doomed through the aporetic of historicity and interest. How and on what terms will Chaussard enter the moment except on the grounds of a rhetoric whose persistence depends on that moment's very transience? When he asks (when the flame of the Arts lights up) 'à celui de la Gloire, quel doit être son éclat' [to that of Glory, what should be his brilliance], the answer to his antiphrase 'La durée en égalera-t-elle sa vivacité?' [Will the time equal her vivacity?]²⁶ is already inscribed in the rhetoric of loss. The value of his own text as an evaluation of the art that it will appraise will not be known until it is inscribed in the repeated evaluation of another art that succeeds the death of his own epoch and its arts. Such is the condition of art criticism as a system of meaning. And, of course, this has nothing much to tell us about art in 1806. Except, perhaps, that its fetishising as a timeless phenomenon precedes the full emergence of the Romantic artist, and proceeds from other logics than those of the formation of the bourgeois subject.

26 Ibid., p. 6.

Bi-Centennial Literature on Art and the French Revolution

This review will take the form of a survey of a wide range of materials produced over the last year or two in response to the Bicentennial of the French Revolution. It aims at a general synthesis rather than a detailed examination of any one text. I feel that this approach is justified because, despite the enormous quantity of stuff that has been published, and, at least in the sample I have looked at, the Bicentennial has certainly not been the occasion of a revolution in art history, or even of any major methodological development. One only has to cast one's mind back to Mona Ozouf's *La Fête révolutionnaire* (1976) or Tom Crow's *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (1985) to realise that the very best work on a subject is not necessarily timed to come out for a centennial, and that much of the new groundwork of detailed scholarship, such as the books of Philippe Bordes, has also been around for some time.¹ This is not to say that there has not been some very good work indeed. But, for example, as far as the question of gender is concerned, art history has been quite regressive. And the detailed study of changes in the institutions or conditions of cultural production has largely taken back seat in favour of iconology or ideology critique. In a recent article I suggested that 'the tenth anniversary of *Block* is probably more important than the Bicentennial'.² As far as the history of art is concerned, I now feel able to take my partisan tongue out of my cheek.

In the end, the honours for a fundamental rewriting and repicturing of history probably still have to go to Jean-Paul Goude. In designing the Bastille Day parade in the style of the adverts for *United Colours of Benetton*, marching to the postmodern euphorics of world music, Goude managed to do as much for the commodification of the Great Revolution as the whole century of capitalist sales pitches that has elapsed since the Eiffel Tower flashed its white, red and blue message through the Parisian sky. It formed a perfect culmination for the week of those phoney and megalomaniac inaugurations of Mitterand's

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1 Ozouf 1976; Crow 1985.

2 See *Block*, No. 15, 1989. It was the final issue to appear.

architectural 'revolution', the Opéra Bastille and the Arc at la Défense, where the heads of all the 'advanced' states were carted round to marvel and envy at the health of the French form of their system. Game, set and match to social democracy, with the new right coming in a good loser for filling the nicer class of newagents' windows with sentimental *récits* about Louis Capet and other *tutti quanti* of the old régime. Even so, as a professional francophile, I was deeply shocked by the choice of the pure kitsch of Folon's three-bird drawing as the official symbol of the anniversary. Rocksinger Renaud's sinister T-shirt version of it as three bombers with the caption '*saigneurs du tiers monde*' (bloodsuckers of the Third World) was one of the few reminders of the vigour of the images of the long-gone revolutionary decade.

Speaking of iconography, it is as well to remember that most of the newly published images and *récits* of the Revolution were not aimed at us *savants*. The shelves at the FNAC were groaning under comic strips that, at a superficial glance, seemed to get everywhere from the most lurid of adventure stories to a well-meaning moralism that could have come straight out of a primary school in the 1880s. Michel Vovelle brought out his five-volume illustrated history, in the Livre Club Diderot/Editions Messidor coffee table series of revolutionary histories for the faithful of the PCF.³ This appeared over two years ago, and so made available a unique combination of modern scholarship and extensive iconographical research that may escape the circuit of some art historians. The more the pity, as he starts by drawing attention to the problem of trying to make too much sense of any particular few images drawn from a corpus that numbers up to 50,000 items – a problem that cultural critique is ever anxious to avoid, as we will see. At the same time he sets out to use some thousands of them to produce a complex and original visual narrative. Inevitably this results in a more stimulating publication than some of the work devoted specifically to caricature, such as the two volumes published by the CNRS, de Baecque and Langlois' *Caricature Révolutionnaire* and *Contre-Révolutionnaire* respectively,⁴ even though these do open up an entirely new stage in the serious interpretation of revolutionary caricature and the study of its modes of production and circulation on a scale not envisaged in Agulhon's *Marianne into Battle*.⁵ For another public again, the museum-going weekend family, the exhibition *Les Savants et la Révolution Française* at the Villette museum was a different kind of offering altogether. This really quite fascinating display of documents and objects

3 Vovelle 1989.

4 Baecque 1988; Langlois 1988.

5 Agulhon 1981.

charted all those scientific achievements of the revolutionary period that had to do with measurement, signs, travel, inventions. But if you got engrossed in the marvellous objects and documents stuffed in the showcases round the wall, crouching to read their poorly-designed captions, then you were liable either to miss out on, or be distracted by, the series of five cabaret acts that really formed the core of the exhibition, and that dramatise the Méridien and other notable phenomena, in song and dance. The nearest approach in print to this informed entertainment is Denis Guedj's little book in the series 'Découvertes Gallimard', entitled *La Révolution des Savants*,⁶ which, like its three companions on David, Literature, and Architecture, combines an easy-going scholarship with a lively montage of image and document.

Because of this richness of types of publication and address, of the crossing of boundaries between levels of scholarship, spectacle and consumption, it is as well to remind oneself that the books I will look at here are, after all, only a tiny part of the iconography of the Bicentennial. In this respect the most significant publication of all is the Bibliothèque Nationale/Pergamon Press interactive video disc of the complete revolutionary holdings of the Hennin, de Vinck and other collections, which can be bought, together with the controlling programmes, for about £900. Given that your library has the right player, that is less costly than even one spell of the months of work that it takes to go through the reserve collections at the B.N., available as they are for a miserable eight hours per week. It may not be as nice as the privileged access to those precious collections, and I hope it does not mean that the originals are from now on unavailable. But they will escape from the private attention and commentary of a few specialised scholars and inevitably be subjected to new kinds of interpretation and use. One has to sustain one's chagrin, just as must any other marginal species in the struggle against new technologies.

In her review of the exhibition *La Révolution et l'Europe* – itself well worth seeking out – Linda Nochlin writes that Klaus Herding's introduction to the catalogue may be 'one of the best things ever written on the subject'.⁷ If this judgment errs a little on the side of generosity, this is because 'ever' is really quite a long time in revolutionary historiography. The parameters for the study of the art of the French Revolution were very largely set over around 80 or more years ago. The pioneering essay of Plekhanov on the French Art of the eighteenth century took a major step beyond the earlier work of Renouvier (*Histoire de l'Art pendant la Révolution*, 1863) or Despois (*Vandalisme révolutionnaire*,

6 Guedj 1988.

7 Nochlin 1989a.

1868) – which were largely concerned with the politics of the Second Empire – by defining a set of explanatory propositions out of the basic, Marxian analysis of class.⁸ And if in so doing he set up the problematic of ‘what art belongs to what class’, and if this can be decided, then the question ‘how does this inform the way that it looks’, he not only worked out the framework for discussions that were to be carried on through Agnès Humbert (*Louis David*, 1936), Arnold Hauser (*The Social History of Art*, Vol. 3), Frederick Antal (*Reflections on Classicism and Romanticism*, 1935–41) or Nicos Hadjinicolaou, but in doing so set loose a shoal of red herrings that still have to be hunted down.⁹ A concurrent historiography, represented by the work of Benoit (*L’Art français sous la Révolution et l’Empire*, 1897), Rosenthal (*La Peinture romantique*, 1914) and, above all, Locquin (*La Peinture d’Histoire en France de 1747 à 1785*, 1912) refined the institutional and social history of artistic production, the relations and interactions of aesthetics and art practice and our understanding of the meanings of contemporary critical debates. These books are still essential reading, and Locquin especially needs to be translated, as along with Crow’s work, it forms the core for any serious study of the eighteenth century. However it was not until Crow that these materials were fundamentally reread, very largely, I think, in the light of Robert Darnton’s research into literature, in such a way that the ‘which class/which style’ red herring was laid to rest.¹⁰ It is in Crow’s *Painters and Public Life* that we find a genuinely complex understanding of the formation of both a public for art and of the development of an ideology of the ‘public’, of the unevenness and contradictions in the evolution of institutions, of the interweaving of aesthetic ideologies and individual careers that make up a solid basis for the rethinking of and opening up of new approaches to the Revolutionary decade.¹¹ I will, therefore, take it that it is a benchmark for any signs of development in the field.

Thus, while Herding’s essays (found in the Los Angeles and the *Révolution et l’Europe* catalogues), two of the many he has recently published, are a *tour de force* of sustained and detailed analysis of revolutionary imagery and a highly imaginative interrogation of the theoretical and critical categories needed for their interpretation, he remains embedded in the teleologies that Crow has so skillfully deconstructed. That is to say that, rather than develop a historical critique of the possibility of the production of meaning out of the analysis of the relation of signs with their real and imagined publics, Herding chooses to focus

8 Plekhanov 1953.

9 Humbert 1947; Hauser 1962; Antal 1966; Hadjinicolaou 1978.

10 Darnton 1971.

11 Crow 1985.

his attention on the idea of a successful revolutionary art and the problem of the extent to which it was or wasn't complete in arriving at a point of becoming articulate in the systematic reorganisation of signs. Or, rather, he runs this into his study of the contemporary consciousness of what a revolutionary art might be. Thus, in both his 'Visual Codes and Graphic Arts of the French Revolution' and his more general work on artistic utopias, 'Utopie concrète à l'échelle mondiale' in the Grand Palais catalogue, Herding has to signal especially crucial or complete images, whether the *Marat* of David, which is already canonical, or the print, *Le Nouvel Astre français*, which becomes newly canonical. As I have suggested in my reference to Vovelle, this is a dangerous procedure as, even while it depends on detailed and long-term iconographic reading of heritages of imagery and meaning, of shifts, and re-locations, there is no guarantee of the placing of significance in a context in which difference of meaning is written in its basic materiality. This *must* be taken into account. As it is, this overarching conceptual closure is a pity, because otherwise the essays are indeed both extraordinarily rich contributions to Revolutionary studies. Some of the themes that Herding handles superbly in both essays are those of: the interrelation of different languages of art, roughly speaking 'high' and 'low' in the body of a visual text in determining a point of address and formulating a vocabulary of the hitherto unspoken; the nature of the affective or emotional in a régime of revolutionary reason, a problem that he rightly signals through Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the Enlightenment; the nature of the representation of the human body and gesture at a time of rupture in both social mores and systems of representation; and, implicitly, the reworking of the art historical tradition of iconography as social method.

This is surely enough to make for some fascinating and important reading. If I emphasise the problems of how to theorise object/context, then this is really because it is a crucial one when studying moments of rapid and short-term change. In my own work on the political print of the Paris Commune I have come across exactly the same kind of limits in being able to argue for the precise historicity of meaning, and likewise they are signalled in the work of the de Baecque and Langlois.¹² It is probably of some interest that such questions can occur in two distinct historical periods, but the fact that they are both revolutionary does not mean that we should study either of them in the light of a reified or teleological concept of revolutionary art. A lapse that has something in common with the reified concept of anality that Al Boime brings to bear on David's political cartoons in his essay 'Jacques-Louis David, Scatological Dis-

12 Baecque 1988; Langlois 1988.

course in the French Revolution and the Art of Caricature', in the Los Angeles catalogue.¹³ Boime's always wonderfully generous and scholarly articles often have an exciting element of hit or miss. This one hits with its rich historical texture and opening up questions of sexuality, but misses on theoretical models, if only because one does not need a mixture of Bakhtin/Rabelais and Freud to prove that David belonged to an anti-Hébertiste fraction of the Montagne. Nor am I sure what it is that I am supposed to be convinced of in the proposition that David takes on a kind of Ancien Régime anality: 'Ironically, the onset of the Terror forced de Sade to recognise his humanity, while David discovered his anal-sadism. Unlike David, de Sade refused to authorise executions ...'. The argument depends upon a rather literal identification of farting with the anal. It reads, oddly for a scholar above all sympathetic to revolutionary art, like one of the mid-nineteenth-century psycho-pathologies of David in the manner of Léon de Laborde (in *De l'union des Arts et l'Industrie*). In his essay, 'Counter-revolutionary Caricature', in the same collection, Claude Langlois, as in his book of that title, goes into a truly complex subject in a manner that is attentive to its ideological pitfalls as to the elaboration of its social basis. In the same volume, and with typical skill, Michel Melot also elaborates the social conditions of the production of meaning for caricature. He slips behind the grand schemata of interpretation, yet builds the foundations for them.

I would like to discuss Lynn Hunt's contribution to the Los Angeles collection in terms of my objections to Boime's, but it may first be useful to take a short excursion around some of the other materials.¹⁴ I have already signalled the Découvertes Gallimard series, a modestly-priced range of computer-set paperbacks aimed at the intelligent, older teenager. The interest of these is their lively and complicated layout, marked by a combination of illustration, text and caption that demands very careful attention and piecing together in the style of one of the better kind of multiple attention displays in a museum. The texts too are up to date in their scholarship, elegantly brief, and each introductory narrative is followed by a section devoted to contemporary documents. I find these very satisfying, and ideally suited to their public. Régis Michel's biography of David is really a scrupulous model of its genre,¹⁵ building upon and popularising his own research as well as the perceptions of Humbert and Crow without burying itself in historiography. The opening picture pages, characteristic of the whole series, is here a photographic breakdown of *Marat*, the divine Marat, that is

13 Boime 1988.

14 Hunt 1988.

15 Michel 1988.

rather in the manner of Alain's old picture book on David. In sombre colours, accompanied by quotations from Baudelaire and Marat himself, it is quite moving for any unreconstructed Robespierriste. Michel's contribution to his and P. Bordes collection, *Aux Armes at Aux Arts*, is likewise a fine and thorough introduction to the Salons of the Revolutionary period.¹⁶ It is most revealing on the structures of the public taste for art at a time when the public spectacle of Revolution was something rather different. This essay, together with Bordes's own piece on politics and art, Udolpho van de Sandt's on competitions and prizes, and Pommier's more limp 'mise en place' of theoretical/aesthetic genealogies and principles, will ensure that *Aux Armes* remains a point of reference. It should satisfy specialists as well as broader public, which is more than can be said for Emmet Kennedy's *A Cultural History of the French Revolution*. Kennedy ambitiously sets out from the determination to do a sort of *longue durée* of the intellectual sources of the Revolution, rightly wishing to set change and continuity against each other. There is no doubt that this is both a necessary and a difficult enterprise, but here we get the worst of both worlds. The parameters of discussion are fairly arcane for a non-specialist of either French history or historiography, and the detailed topics, which one cannot fault in their range, are too thinly treated for a reader with a more than elementary knowledge. I envisage that this volume will be quite a success as a stopgap on undergraduate courses.

The Bicentennial has naturally seen the re-edition of important works, such as René Taton's *Enseignement et Diffusion des Sciences en France* and the launching of fascinating new enterprises like Michel Serres's *Éléments d'Histoire des Sciences*, that offer rich materials for art history.¹⁷ More immediate however, and a necessary complement to the study of the visual as a crucial aspect of cultural transformation of the Academies, the *fêtes* and everyday life, there have been a number of books on music, which seems to remain a theoretically less developed subject than art history. Amongst these *La Vie musicale en France au temps de la Révolution*, by Adelaide de Place, makes a good introduction.¹⁸ In a wide range of materials it deals with popular song, the *fêtes*, theatre, *bals* and *cafés*, as well as education, censorship etc., and it has a good bibliography. The regular inclusion of this kind of material in art-historical bibliography can only serve to widen thinking on the nature of public life and the forms of social representation. However, like most of the texts I have already covered, it would be

16 Michel and Bordes 1988.

17 Taton 1964; Serres 1989.

18 Place 1989.

difficult to site it in the modern historiography of the revolution as a whole, or as a distinctive response to the problematics of understanding it.

With a few notable exceptions (Herding again), art history seems to keep itself isolated from the historiographical developments outlined by James Cuno in his general introduction to the Los Angeles collection, or implicit in Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's aggressive and pettishly 'réac' little foreword. I wonder, for instance, if the subtlety of Crow's analysis of the social basis for Revolutionary art offers more comfort to the old school (Soboul-Vovelle) or the revisionists (Furet-Doyle)?¹⁹ But in opening onto the wider historiography of the revolution, I will concentrate only on one issue. This is gender, and I will discuss it only in relation to the books under review. With the exception of Lynn Hunt's 'The Political Psychology of Revolutionary Caricatures',²⁰ it is absent from almost all of them. So, the question one must put is, very simply, does it matter? An initial response on comparing Boime, who uses a concept of sexuality abstracted from one of gender, with Hunt, who really does use gender as a historiographical method, is yes. This may seem unfair to Boime who does at least raise these questions, but who opens himself to the criticism of doing so to get just one more political reading rather than to generate an integrated method. Hunt's opening discussion on the ways in which revolutionaries like the Abeé Grégoire or Condorcet understood the importance of signs is arguable. But I would not wish to challenge her circumspect and creative use of Freud's notion of the 'family romance': 'It is not necessary to accept the entire Freudian framework in order to make use of the concept of family romance, by which I mean here more generally the development of unconscious fantasies about the familial order underlying revolutionary politics'. As a model, however, she is able to use it to examine the collapse of traditional systems of authority through the images of popular print. (I am surprised she makes no reference to Carol Duncan's 'Fallen Fathers').²¹ And on this basis, she goes on to disclose the difference between the representation of the King and the Queen as a crucial manifestation of the representation of gender difference at the heart of political discourse, and the establishment of a new, national figure in the female formulation of Marianne. An important conclusion. One that goes beyond Agulhon, who, in his *Marianne into Battle*, thought that the gender of Marianne had no real political significance. (Hunt, of course, is not alone in this field – there are writers like Joan B. Landes, Joan W. Scott and Dorinda Outram).

19 See Souboul 1964 and 1974; Vovelle 1989; Furet 1978; Doyle 1980.

20 Hunt 1989.

21 Duncan 1981.

So, to take the best work in this bunch, would Herding's essays be 'better' if he took gender into account? Or if he had assumed gender analysis into his fundamental, conceptual framework? Who can say? It does, however, seem odd to have to put a question whose very asking implies that gender is still generally thought of as a women's problem: an irony particularly as 1789 does seem to be a watershed. Geneviève Fraisse in her contribution to Revolutionary studies, the splendid *Muse de la Raison*,²² has systematically demonstrated the intertwining of the concepts of woman, democracy and legality in the social and philosophical evolution of the new social order inaugurated by the Revolution: 'Si l'on peut faire l'histoire de la différence des sexes, et de son conflit politique, alors la représentation elle-même change. [...] A la question de savoir si la raison est sexuée, et comment, on ne sait encore que répondre' [If we can write a history of sexual difference, and of the political conflict of the sexes, then representation itself changes ... to the question of knowing whether reason is sexed, and how, we do not any longer know how to respond]. Probably, after two decades of feminist art history, it is still too much to ask that epistemological questions, 'du savoir sur la différence de sexes, et celle de la différence des sexes dans le champ du savoir' [to know of the difference between the sexes, and that of the difference of the sexes in the arena of knowledge], should be a matter of scholarly routine and habits of thought.²³ But let's not worry about it. For after all, very few feminist art historians occupy positions of power within the job market. That is a revolution art history is yet to enjoy.

22 Fraisse 1989.

23 See Lajer-Burcharth 1989.

The Words of Art, the Artist's Status: Technique and Affectivity in France (1789–98)¹

In this essay I shall be looking at some complex transformations of the art world that can be traced in France in the period just after the Revolution of 1789. Though Jacques-Louis David is not really the subject of my study, he figures throughout in a variety of guises, now as cause, now as effect – as a personality incidental to, yet centrally involved in those changes. I have at the same time sought to underline some themes that have been current in art historiography for the last decade or so.

One of these is the question of the individuality of the artist, and its construction through institutional practices and biography. David is set within a sequence of historical conceptions of the revolutionary artist, and I suggest that space between them produces the word ‘art’ and the word ‘David’ as a play of ‘différance’ that articulates some crucial aesthetic and social hierarchies in the unfolding of a modern industrial culture. An advantage of this thesis is that, in diverting the ‘biography question’ back into the eighteenth century, and out of the later conjuncture of nineteenth-century Bohemianism which it was evolved to criticise, it becomes more useful as an historical concept.² At the same time the unexpected shifts in the positions and values of the word ‘art’, in relation to different modes of feeling and utility, point to some important breaks and continuities between the ideological structures of Ancien Régime artistic production and the political and cultural economy of the 1840s and 50s. The notions of genre and artistic skill interweave in places and institutions in such a way as to articulate the relation between new and old kinds of work and feeling. So another theme of the essay is the nature and place of affect in forms of public life and the perception of the relation ‘art and design’.

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- 1 This is a modified version of a paper entitled ‘Un Effet David?’, given at the Louvre in December 1989 as a contribution to the bicentennial symposium *David contre David*.
- 2 See Nick Flynn, M.A. Thesis, University of Leeds, 1989, for a discussion of this idea in an English context *vis-à-vis* Benjamin West.

Politics & Feeling c. 1793

In the mid-nineteenth century it was possible to argue that the Revolution of 1798 had not only disrupted the development of the arts, but also unhinged the potentially sound influence that they were able to exercise on material production. This was the position laid out by Léon E.S.J. de Laborde in *De l'Union des arts et l'industrie*;³ his monumental report on the Great Exhibition of 1851. In that dramatic mix of equivocal conservatism and industrial progressivism, working towards an understanding of the proper hierarchy of the arts in the new industrial state, David's career more than anything symptomatised a political, cultural and industrial pathology of the modern day. The disadvantage of this argument was that it left the French school of painting with a gap where methods and traditions of critical and historical discourse called for continuity and progress. Yet it was possible to get round the problem by having more than one David and more than one pathway through the history of 1789 – as many pathways, indeed, as there were politics of the 1850s and 60s.

It is not difficult to see why such a dilemma should have arisen. For example, in the heated debates of the Montagnard artists' organisation, the Commune Générale des Arts, one of David's most notorious pupils, Wicar, spoke up on the question of Flemish artists. The moment, in 1793, is the peak of Robespierre's power, and also one of profound tension between the movement of popular political forces and the radical centralism of the Montagne. The public language of politics is a classical rhetoric of myth and allegory, yet in the Salons the newly ascendant taste in painting is that of landscape. The semi-official minutes of the Commune report Wicar thus: 'Wicar leur a voué une haine mortelle. Ne demandait-il pour eux la guillotine?' [Wicar felt a mortal hatred towards them. Did he not ask for the guillotine for them?]⁴ The phrase, like others of Wicar's, is striking, even in the noise of revolutionary discussion, and consistent with his opinions, as far as they were recorded at this point. Louis Hautecoeur, in his biographical study *Louis David* (1954), cites an anecdote told by Delafontaine in which Wicar confronts his master on just this issue: 'Il faut que nous fassions guillotiner tous le peintres de genre' [Is it necessary for us to have all the genre painters guillotined?], he says to him. He might reasonably have expected his teacher to agree. But David 'takes his life in his hands' and confesses his own love of Teniers.⁵ The weight of the story is carefully

3 de Laborde 1856.

4 Lapauze 1903, pp. 207 ff. See also the *Journal de Détournelle* (M.S., Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale).

5 Hautecoeur 1954, p. 140.

judged in Hautecoeur's book, which, a century after de Laborde, was negotiating the same problem of reconciling political and aesthetic judgement as it now presented itself to an academic history of art. Even in 1793, then, the height of the master's revolutionary activity, he is to be disclosed as a moderate, anachronistically endowed with the artistic temperament needed to be the great founder of the modern French school. His disagreement with Wicar opens fissures between the differently fated teleologies of Art and Revolution, that will henceforth run together only at each other's cost.

Argument by *reductio ad absurdum* was an explicit rhetorical method as useful in a modern biography as it had been in the rhetoric of the Revolution itself. Positions like Wicar's, as well as anecdotes about them, were useful in figuring the logic of radicalism and in discrediting it. For example, the pamphlet *Félicitations à M. Lequinio sur son projet de démolir les monumens des arts ...*, signed Chrysostôme Alethes, argues from an ironic acclamation of Lequinio's proposal to melt down all those statues that are 'monumens d'esclavage' to the conclusion that we must soon undertake to demolish Paris, our 'special city', then Lyon, Bordeaux and Marseille.⁶ But given his status as a regicide, David's own death as an *artist* could all too easily be ensured in recourse to this *reductio*. The posthumous politics of David were to become focused around siting him as either the victim or the maker of his circumstances. In 1856 de Laborde put virtue's case quite succinctly, denouncing the 'revolutionary spirit ... that kills poetry before it kills the poet'.⁷

David's politics and, no less, his prolific practices of art condemned him on all counts as an exemplary monstrosity. At the same time, the fear of being

6 *Félicitation publique à M. Lequinio sur son projet de démolir les monumens des arts*, signed Chrysostôme d'Alethes, unpaginated and undated.

7 de Laborde 1856, pp. 169–79. 'David avait pour auxiliaire l'esprit révolutionnaire, cet esprit qui tue la poésie avant de tuer le poète. Le chef de lécole poussa dans cette carrière fatale tous ses élèves, dont il avait conquis la docilité au dépens de leur initiative'. Clearly de Laborde aligns himself to a political axis that supports the Second Empire by a sense of its continuity with the authority of the old monarchy and what he sees as its attempts to engage in a reasoned process of reform. His views are crucial in coming to understand the fates of art in a social system where the increasing division of labour makes such fragmentary demands upon it – and his ideas of a 'democratic' language of drawing actually pick up a thread from the revolutionary École Polytechnique, via Charles Dupin, Adolphe Blanqui and other expolytechnicians concerned with popular education. His hatred of David is overdetermined by his preoccupations with the role of Fine Art in the Expositions Universelles as the apex of a pyramid of social values that David had betrayed. I am indebted to Molly Nesbit's important development of these themes in her lecture, 'The Language of Industry', David Center Seminar, February 1987.

forced to accept the conclusion that David's politics did indeed undermine the value of his painting gave an impulse to refine the tropes of his recuperation as a simple 'chef d'école'. If Hautecoeur still had to negotiate the problem in 1954, it was built into the official discourse of the Institut and the Classe des Beaux-Arts from the moment of their foundation. In the academic *éloge*, for example, a highly specialised form of art history as obituary, the interest in David, as in many another artist, lay in securing historical and institutional coherence and unity for the Institute and the Classe. The political *and* aesthetic fate of David's more extreme students could be deployed to emphasise the need to sustain a pure and unitary artistic identity for David across what comes to be seen as the character deficiencies or misfortune of his political activity. Thus, in his versified *Hommage à la Mémoire du Peintre David* of 1838, Lemerrier contrasted David and his true progeny, the great academics of the Napoleonic period and Restoration, with the radical Topino-Lebrun: 'Que devint Topineau, lui, l'amant idolâtre/d'une liberté folle et cruelle marâtre?' [What became of Topineau, him, the idolising lover/of a crazy and cruel stepmother Liberty?]⁸

Yet there is more to Wicar's avowal. It really does sound a discordant and disconcerting note in the general discourse on artists and on art. It goes beyond the sternly practical considerations given to the reordering of art and everyday life, whether it be the concourse for the 'most efficacious way of destroying a Gothic cathedral', or the plan for the design of a new national dress, signed by Wicar, and which actually shares the same excited language.⁹ This can be sensed particularly in the deploying of that mixed or muddled metaphor, the slippage

8 Lemerrier 1838. See also Jouffroy and Bordes 1977. If extremism left such a mark, then, we can understand Wicar's declaration as one of those gestures that J. Dubois, writing of a later Commune (in Dubois 1962), calls 'an innovatory verbal act' – but one that acquired its significance for reasons quite contrary to its intentions. Such speech gestures may or may not be deeply symptomatic, may or may not, therefore, have a lasting effect. And though this one was hardly on everyone's lips during the following century, it does seem like a model for all kinds of iconoclasm to be. Read at its worst interpretation it dolefully confirms all too many of the modern, political neuroses that determine the developing historiography of the Revolution from the last century to our own day, from Léon de Laborde to the work of a Hampson or a Schama, for example. No doubt as a result of Wicar, or the movement he represented, sometime in the future the Vendôme Column will be cast down by Communards invoking 93, a feminist, a suffragette, will slash Valasquez's *Rokeby Venus* in the National Gallery in London, and Chinese students will deface imperial tombs. Maybe a more civil version of the same sentiment underlies the philosophy of deconstruction. See also Linda Nochlin, who, in a discussion of woman in nineteenth-century art beginning with David's *Horaces*, also cites this lineage. See Nochlin 1989, pp. 1–4, and 26.

9 'Sous l'Empire des Despotes, la classe inutile des riches désœuvrés déterminoit la forme à

between the practical and symbolic value of the guillotine as the instrument of execution and the image of power. And, through this muddle, Wicar's declaration leads us back to an overdetermination of the relation of aesthetic and political judgement, a process of determination that seems to produce its effects, and emerge through a deep alienation of the sense of affect. On the grounds of the same political democracy that inspired Kant's categorical and disinterested aesthetic and his theoretical opposition to the unique investment or disguise of solely aristocratic interests in the value of pure feeling, Wicar pronounces the aesthetic to be the category of the wholly interested.¹⁰ In fact, his logic tends to lead to the more or less perfect identification of interest with affect. Clearly, this strange utopia was not then enunciated as a programme, although, with hindsight, it might be mistakenly read in this way. For arriving at just such an identification has since become typically the key task of a committed art, revolutionary or otherwise. But it does suggest that the revolutionary reaction against the very particular revival of classical values and history painting practised by d'Angiviller and his predecessors could pass through the expression of the total impossibility of disinterest, rather than the appropriation of its masquerade. If anything, then, Wicar unwittingly gives a renewed breath to one of the forms of address of the overthrown monarchy's artistic system. One which, in turning the supreme category of history painting into a masquerade of aesthetic disinterest, was for this reason responsible for the alienation of taste as affect from taste as social form.

This much is evident in the work of Locquin, Saisselin or Crow, all of whom have shown the diversity of types of consumption, definitions and uses that pulled art to and from, around and away from any attempts to impose a single, unified, Academic system of reference.¹¹ Coming to realise that the complexities of the modes of consumption and display, the space between official discourse and private manners, the differentiation of group and class and their overlapping in the fields of special and appropriate languages, etc., are all a part of the understanding of the social relations of artistic production in the eighteenth century. This has been crucial to getting out of the classical Plekhanovian or Hauserian impasse. The problematic, that is, of fixing which art belongs to which class, and why they never seem quite to match up. And, at the same time this work has clarified our understanding of the fact that iconography, too, has

donner aux vêtements: entièrement livrée à des goûts puériles ... elle ne suivit d'autres règles que les caprices de son imagination, ou les conseils de sa fatuité' (Wicar 1793).

10 For a discussion of the equivocal meanings and relations of Kantian and anti-Kantian aesthetics in the last two centuries, see Rancière 2004a.

11 Locquin 1912; Saisselin 1981, pp. 14 ff.; Crow 1985; Plekhanov 1953; Hauser 1962.

a public and a mode of address, and cannot be overgeneralised in lineages of its continuity.¹² If this complexity is as much historical as it is historiographical, then maybe it is not so surprising that one possible articulation of a radical position was to wish away a whole type of art because it represented an out-moded type of pleasure or feeling, one that was itself symptomatic of the uncontrollable character of social relations. And, in so far as the noble style could be freed from now outworn singularity of the word 'noble', then it could, by ellipsis, come to be associated with correct feeling.¹³ Even if the two had never been coterminous under the Ancien Régime, with the freeing of the word 'noble' to denote a quality rather than a class, it might be assumed that they could so become.

For Wicar, of course, it was whistling in the wind to call for such total destruction. It is well enough known that it was to be the Musée des Monuments Français that came to characterise the revolutionary period rather than its iconoclasm.¹⁴ As far back as 1868, Eugène Despois, in his *Vandalisme Révolutionnaire*, was to base his political rehabilitation of the Revolution on the premise that the Convention had created the key institutions of the modern world, in the arts, in education, in industry.¹⁵ The Enlightenment discovery of historical taxonomy, together with the empirical and collectorly habits of the Ancien Régime Académie and its connoisseurs, forged a more effective ideology of history than one that, like Wicar's, was so overtly devoted to its ultimate subversion, to its rewriting through the elimination of its object and materials. And in this failure, Wicar was no less in the grip of available aesthetic and political language than any other of his contemporaries. The historic forms, types of discourse, grammars, words, for the articulation of the whole field of relations of the aesthetic and the social had broken free from a security of reference and viability of function – that had been the terrain of the complex conflicts and polemics of the pre-revolutionary decades. If Wicar, like David, tended to fol-

12 See also the two important essays by Klaus Herding: Herding 1988, pp. 83 ff.; and the introduction to the catalogue *La Révolution en Europe*, Herding 1989, pp. xxi–l.

13 For a discussion of this important question, here and in relation to my later discussion of David, see Crow 1985, pp. 218–27; and Herding 1989, pp. xxvi ff. Locquin 1912 makes the point clear in social terms when he refers (p. 43) to the premier peintre Pierre's refusal to admit 'laquais' to the schools of the Académie.

14 See Bann 1984.

15 Despois 1868 is the earliest authoritative account of its kind that goes beyond the simple institutional history of Fourcy's *Histoire de l'École Polytechnique* (Fourcy 1828). My own reading of these materials is made through my understanding of Adorno and Horkheimer 1979.

low the logic of disruption and dispersion, for other artists – the majority in all probability – as much energy went into holding things together.

The school of David, those painters so conventionally disappointing as revolutionaries, were in some ways devoted to just such a task. If men like Girodet or Gérard are remembered mostly for the strange intensities of their work, they knew intimately the value of producing an art for aesthetics' sake, of playing the space between the different public spaces of expression. In the semi-official publication that was the great Didot edition of Racine (1801), their illustrations exemplified the enduring inseparability of various languages of the ideal, and the means of linking their tropes, whether they originate with the Academic Discourse of the seventeenth century or in the writings of Winckelmann.¹⁶ In their teaching practice, at least as it is set down in the records of the Institut, they clearly place the reproduction of an institutional environment above the deviation from its norms that so much of their work can really be read as representing.¹⁷ There still seems to be no point at which affect and social form could come to rest together. Moreover, the multiplicity of the sites of their separation itself has to be understood in terms of the continuities and discontinuities in the languages and institutions of art that were predicated by the shifting of the ensemble of the conditions of artistic production – a point to which I will return.

To stay with Wicar just for a moment, it is easy and amusing too to imagine his hatred put into practice. The heads of Rubens, Ruysdael or Teniers rolling in the annals of art history: or worse, the heads rolling from those resplendent representations of Marie de Medicis, or the rounding up of those dancing villagers in a rustic *fête* by Teniers. Is there some repressed hatred of an undisciplined people that so readily bundles them into the same tumbril as their rulers? Was this factitious, Flemish countryside a veritable Vendée in comparison to the décor of the Parisian *fêtes*, those great, disciplined parades that finally delivered the raw materials of art – 'man' and nature – live into the hands of the artist-politician? Or was it an involuntary taint of the Hébertiste populism so feared by the Montagne? Had classic art become so perfectly assimilated as a revolutionary norm that the Flemish school had in turn become an enemy of the Republic that had to be defended against mere public taste?

16 See Potts 1982. However the argument is largely taken from my own unpublished *Ingres and the Method of Academic Criticism* (1969–71), as are the arguments and documents concerning special Academic functions and the École Gratuite.

17 See Rifkin, *Ingres*, pp. 115 ff. The annual proceedings of the Classe des Beaux Arts for the Napoleonic period provide a source for the comparison of different registers of language in different public or official spaces. See Coupin 1829 and Girodet 1806.

After all, throughout the Salons of the Revolutionary decade, landscape moved steadily towards the ascendancy. What does it really mean to avow a 'mortal hatred' for a dead art, for a mere signifier in a long-established system of aesthetic conflict? Did people really want to turn art back into life, to regulate the gestures and postures of the everyday in the moralising style of one 'imaginaire' of antiquity rather than another? And would this in turn make life more like the 'nature' that was held to be the source of all true art? Or was the method of caricature so deeply seated in the mentalities of the decade that it had ceased to be caricature and become simply speech? In caricature exaggeration was a commonplace trope, as likely to serve the purposes of political scatology as an utopian project; and in either case it extended the use of words that had grown too tight, too narrowly conventional for the fresh potentialities of reference and signification.

Perhaps, then, were we to seek for it during this period, we might locate one more beginning for the narrative of modernity. Not just in the loosening of an economic system and the establishment of a new alignment within the bloc of ruling classes, but also as this freeing of the signifier from its chain of reference. This exposure of the 'différance' in feeling or affect that is felt in both their private and public forms and in the tactical adoption of disinterest across the modes of the consumption of art. Or, if this is not modern, then maybe the post-modern has been with us longer than we had thought. L.E.S.J. de Laborde for one saw the Revolution as a period of servile eclecticism, though he attributed it to an 'affaissement d'esprit ... un abaissement moral' [effacement of spirit ... a moral abasement].¹⁸ Clearly I am not going to try to deal with all these questions or go hunting for the origins of the modern. But I need to emphasise them. My list points to a deep disturbance in language that had to be anchored to new moorings, securing functions that were clear, however they might be plural.¹⁹ I wish to find a context for the reading of David that enlarges still further the circulation of the languages of art at a specific historical moment.

Reconstruction Sites

Now I would like to look at some of these sites where meaning was held in place, and to examine what relation they might have to the example of David.

18 Rifkin, *Ingres*, p. 171. There is a prefigurement too of Adorno and Horkheimer's argument on the uneven relation of belief and knowledge.

19 For background approaches, see Robin 1973, Chapters 3, 4, and 6.

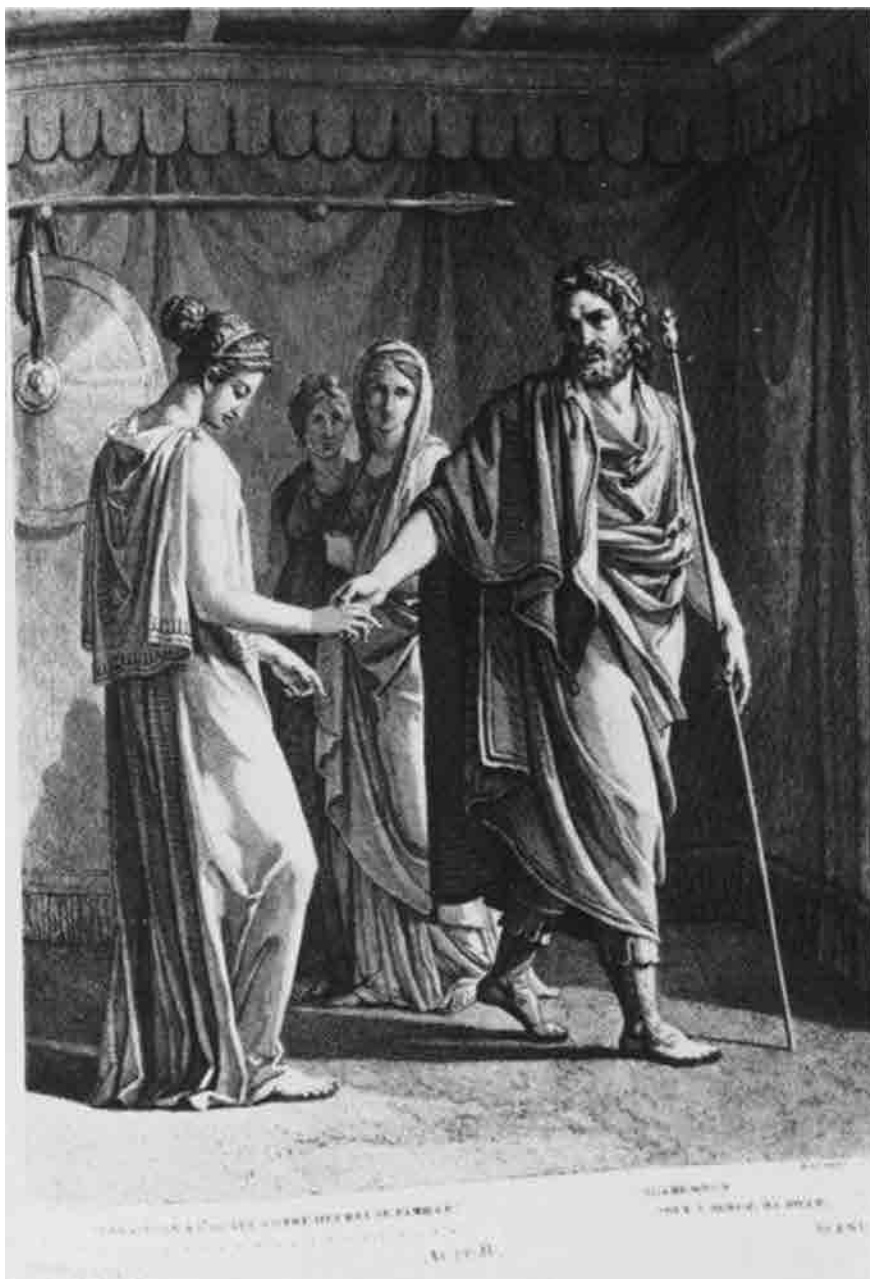


FIGURE 1 F. Gérard, illustration for *Iphigénie*, from the Didot edition of Racine



FIGURE 2 *Girodet, illustration for Andromaque, from the Didot edition of Racine*

The most obvious problem presented by the work of David, which can only partially be identified with his political career in the narrow meaning, is its diversity. There is a sense in which David overfulfilled the potential of the diverse roles given to the official or successful artists of the Ancien Régime. In effect, as de Laborde was to complain, as an argument against its abolition in 1793, the Academic system had long been organised to meet the administrative functions of the state in relation to industry, luxury production, military and scientific work, etc. One has only to follow the day-to-day activities of the Royal Academies to see to what extent they were concerned with quite crucial aspects of planning, building, engineering or education. The development of the *École Gratuite de Dessin* and the role of Bachelier in setting it up in 1767, and planning its courses thereafter, is a very obvious example.²⁰ The objectives and functions of the *École*, as restated by him in 1774, seem to differ very little from much of the discourse on the relation of art and nation in the revolutionary decade itself. Indeed, it is a type of discourse that is to endure throughout the nineteenth century and that still has a place in the articulation of ideas about the international economy:²¹

Le dessin ne doit être considéré comme un art de simple agrément, les avantages qu'on peut en retirer par une étude suivie pour les arts mécaniques sont infiniment précieux à l'état ... Il (le dessin) est l'âme de plusieurs branches des arts, c'est lui qui fait donner la préférence à l'industrie d'une nation; il centuple la valeur des matières premières et souvent il en fait sortir du néant.

[Drawing should not be considered as an art of mere decorousness, the benefits to be derived from a study following the mechanical arts are infinitely valuable to the state ... It (the picture) is the soul of more branches of the arts, it is this which gives preference to the industry of a nation; it multiplies hundredfold the value of raw materials and often makes them appear out of nothingness.]²²

In terms of the connections that Bachelier is making, little has shifted in 1790 when Jesse, the president of the *Assemblée Nationale*, addressed the students of the *École*, except that the prime mover was, naturally, now no longer 'les

20 Courajod 1874; Déforge 1981, especially pp. 146–87.

21 See (again) *Félicitation publique à M. Lequinio sur son projet de démolir les monumens des arts*, signed Chrysostôme d'Alethes, unpaginated and undated.

22 In Courajod 1874. This is taken from the Archives de l'Institut, Architecture, Carton 16.

Académies protégées par la Roi' as with Bachelier. On the contrary, it was the 'régime vivifiant de la liberté' [the invigorating regime of liberty] that would ensure that 'Ces arts, enfants de génie et de l'opulence vont prendre un nouvel essor ...' [These arts, children of genius and opulence, will take off again]. The phraseology proved perfectly adaptable to the early phase of the Revolution simply through the change of the sentence subject. Nor for that matter had the essential vocabulary developed in 1798 at the time of the *Exposition des Produits de l'Industrie*, except that now both the royal patents and privileges and the revolutionary restraints on commerce had both been abolished, and it spoke for yet another political and economic régime:

Ces arts qui nourrissent l'homme, qui fournissent à tous ses besoins et qui adjoutent à ses facultés naturelles par l'invention et l'emploi des machines, sont à la fois le bien de la société, l'âme de l'agriculture et du commerce, et la source la plus féconde de nos jouissances et de nos richesses. Ils ont été longtemps oubliés et même souvent avilis: la liberté doit les venger.

[These arts which nourish man, which furnish all his needs and which add to his natural faculties by invention and the use of machines, are at once the good of society, the soul of agriculture and commerce, and the most fruitful source of our joys and our riches. They have long been forgotten and are even often debased; liberty must avenge them.]²³

In fact, this vocabulary on the relation of art and commerce, or what we would now call 'product design', did indeed serve a succession of régimes, or intellectual and social interests, amongst which the *Encyclopédie* takes its place. Each deploys it both to establish the legitimacy of a specific political economy and to claim the leadership of French manufacture and industry in the competition between nations. In this respect the final phrase of the last quotation is especially indicative of the politics of appropriation that was, necessarily, followed by each régime at the expense of its predecessors, in what we might designate as a struggle for the ownership of the word and its power over history. The process is partially analogous to that engaged by David in his appropriation of the noble style in the years preceeding 1789. That is to say, David's own politic of position in the art world, and of elaborating a richly significant relation of style and iconography, forms part of a complex field of

23 Archives de l'Institut, Architecture, unnumbered Carton.

meanings and relations for the practice of art.²⁴ This practice is not only divided by the genres of art inherent to the Academic discourse – that is to say the area most appropriate to David at the moment of the *Horaces* – but also by the different genres and applications of art itself, in the multiplicity of senses and institutions of that word at the end of the eighteenth century. And, indeed, we could go on to argue that David's own assertion of his private ownership of his art in the paying exhibition of the *Sabines* is, in turn, perfectly analogous to the political economy of that period.²⁵ The other 1793, the year of the laws on copyright rather than that of the *Fête de la Raison*, is now lived out by David for Fine Art, a strategy that reveals as much of the social relations of the Directoire as does the painting's subject matter of its politics.

However, after Thermidor, in the unfolding of this public placing of art in the order of political economy, David is strikingly absent. This much we can see in the procession, the mini-*fête*, that celebrated the *Exposition publique des produits de l'industrie française*. It began with seven detachments of military music and foot soldiers, followed by the 'Régulateur de la Fête' and the 'Artistes Inscrits pour l'Exposition' – that is to say, the various producers. They are followed by the Jury of nine that includes Molard for the Arts et Métiers, Chaptal for the Institut, and then 'Vien, peintre, membre de l'Institut National', Gilet-Laumont for the Conseil des Mines, the sculptor, Moitte, etc. and, to conclude, the Bureau Central and the Ministre de l'Intérieur.²⁶ The presence of the old Vien is striking, because it is typical of the problem of the representation of tradition in artistic vocabulary after the 9 Thermidor. The image of the renovation of the French School is found in the now-mythic hero of the resistance to the Rococo, who alone, in his useless old age, can be found to represent the integrity of aesthetic discourse as a formal continuum, as a source of values for the present that fulfils two crucial criteria. First, that he, the exemplar, cannot be implicated in a politically embarrassing narrative of artistic progress. And second, that his activities as an artist have been sufficiently narrow to leave the category of Fine Art unpolluted by the fading of its boundaries into the gestures of daily life and industry, that its duty is to instruct without for all that losing its integrity.

24 The definitive discussion of these questions remains Crow 1985; and Crow 1978. See also Bordes and Michel 1978; and Régis Michel's fine biography of David in Sahut and Michel 1988.

25 See David's own well-known suite of justifications for the display and iconography of his work in the pamphlets accompanying the exhibition of the work.

26 Archives Nationales, F¹².985, Expositions et Produits de l'Industrie, An VI–1822. An VI, Ministre de l'Intérieur.

It is then, I believe, necessary to amplify our reading not just of David's individual reasons for the abolition of the Académies, for which he made himself the advocate, but of their relation to a nexus of causes. The unfolding of his own activities in the Revolution had transformed the logic of exogamy already inherent to academic activity into an interaction of art and other forms of social and economic practice, of which the *fêtes* are the most outstanding instance, that far exceeded the old institutional framework. The purpose of the specialised, academic functions was ultimately to provide instruction and improve certain aspects of the productive forces, and yet to ensure their continued organisation around the monarchy and the system of patents and privileges. If their abolition was so effectively promoted by David, then it was because the uneven dynamic of economic and social development and state formation left a space in which they had neither ideological nor organisational significance. Even with the relatively wordly Académie Royale d'Architecture, we find that at the end of the week of the fall of the Bastille it registered only the need to give its students extra time to fulfil their requirements for the annual *concours* and for the *Grands Prix*. And that, the very week of its abolition, when David's friend and protector, its secretary Sedaine, noted in his last minutes that 'David probably sees it all for the best', the Citoyen Franque was presenting diverse plans for monuments in the city of Marseille, amongst which was one for an 'arc de triomphe donnant sur la place royale'.²⁷ Deep down in these details of speech, in the self-absorption that so readily consumes conflicting meaning and historical time, one can measure the historical limitations of the Académies.

To a large extent, then, the functions for which they could be valued passed into the realm of Instruction Publique, and it was in the work of the Comité d'Instruction Publique that the most crucial applications of art teaching to a wider field were to be debated.²⁸ The emergent forms of the division of labour begin to require something more detailed, more perfectly differentiated both within the structures of Fine Art and its vocabulary, and across the understanding of the different meanings of art, and this in terms of the new forms of private and public consumption that were also developing. The centrality of Instruction Publique is important because it draws our attention to the formation of

27 Lemmonier (ed.) 1926, vol. 60, pp. 252 and 349–50.

28 One has only to cast an eye over any major collection of pamphlets of the Revolutionary period such as the series R and FR in the British Library to see as much. But, of course, there are the published volumes of the Comité in Guillaume (ed.) 1888; and the *Discours et Rapports* (Hippeau 1881).

new spaces for the application of art that in turn helped to make space and sense for the reformation of the Académies in the form of the Institut. It is in the generalities of education that we can begin to trace the emergence of a programme in which one understanding of art slips definitively over into what we have come to call design, while the new Classe des Beaux-Arts took on a range of ceremonial discussions on the teaching and wording of art and music and their place in public life.

This balancing act in the division of the functions of art is haunted by David, both because his career up to 1794 had taken the notion of art as a public service to the limits of credibility, and because he did this in conditions that, to say the least, were deeply compromising. The disruption of Thermidor was such as to ensure that the gap between the two parts of this double negative was so deep as to be unredeemable. Ultimately it can only be rationalised by recourse to David's personality, his defective character. This is the corollary of his genius which, in turn, is the condition and only acceptable explanation of the unnatural ability to choose that he exercised so freely, as 'pageant master' or as regicide.²⁹ Remember, after all, that Bachelier as head of the École Gratuite was no genius, but a painter in the minor genres. Just as was the landscape painter F.M. Neveu, who, after his intelligent and effective interventions in the Jury des Arts of An II, was to become the teacher of drawing at the École Centrale des Travaux Publics.³⁰ This school, the future Polytechnique, was one of those achievements of the Convention that Eugène Despois sees as the vindication of the 'Conventional' period of the Revolution. In effect, when it got its courses under way it was very much a Thermidorian Institution. By An VI the course in 'Grammaire et Belles Lettres' stated quite clearly that the modern superiority of written over spoken language lay in the fact that 'chez les modernes, la forme des gouvernemens n'admet plus

29 See T.E. Crow's discussion of these questions in his review of Anita Brooker's work on David: Crow 1982. Of course the whole question haunts David biography from the earliest attempts so that even by 1954 Hatecoeur still has something to explain away. Neil MacWilliam's paper on David criticism in the nineteenth century, also given at the bicentennial conference, confirms some of my suggestions.

30 In the procès-verbaux of the Jury des Arts, Nevue appears alongside Topino and Gérard amongst others, without sharing either their denunciation of academic mores or their vigour of expression. Interestingly Gérard, in contradiction to the theory that Neveu will elaborate in the Polytechnique, argues that 'les arts parlent à tous les hommes: leur langue n'est point conventionnelle, elle est celle de la nature'. Whether this suggests a difference between the philosophies of History and Genre painting, or an amateurish grasp of philosophy, is an open matter.

d'assemblées populaires' [in modern times, the form of governments no longer allows for popular assemblies].³¹

The first *Cahiers*, or course-books of the École, were published in Germinal, An III, and the political shift is as evident in the teaching programmes offered by Neveu as in any of the other aspects of its work. We will look at these courses, then, because they restore a division of labour in the concept of art that was appropriate to the functions of the institution and because, in doing this, they bear the scars of David in their handling of the language of art teaching. Neveu's course texts offer an example both of the continuities of aesthetic language with the Ancien Régime as well as of the disruption that follows from their displacement into a succession of new environments. David's name, needless to say, is never once uttered by Neveu, but rather, as in the *fête* of 1798, Vien figures at the moment of renovation in the French School. Neveu's initial task, however, is quite easy. It is to reconstitute the social value of Fine Art within the parameters of Thermidorian politics on the one hand and within the practice of its teaching for narrowly practical purposes on the other. This he does by placing the general process of a revival of the arts in the old Académies directly in a line of direct historical continuity with the inception of the École Centrale itself:

à l'époque où Lemoine et Boucher avaient perverti l'idée du vrai beau, tous les arts inférieures dégénérèrent par l'influence de leur manière ...³²

[during the epoch when Lemoine and Boucher had perverted the idea of true beauty, all the lower arts degenerated under the influence of their manner ...]

And it is thanks only to the efforts of Greuze and Vien that progress was reestablished. He invokes the Terror, but in a language that appropriates the thinking of the enlightenment as the Reason that follows 'l'époque terrible' rather than as its cause. The arts and sciences 'adoucissent les mœurs, ils embellissent la vie, ils sont les plus doux fruits de la pensée, ils sont le vrai bien de la société' [customs soften, they embellish life, they are the sweetest fruits

31 *Journal Polytechnique ou Bulletin du Travail fait à l'École Centrale des Travaux Publics* (Paris, Imprimerie de la République, then Imprimerie Impériale, Germinal An III), 'Cours de Grammaire et Belles Lettres par M. Andrieux', is found in vol. 3, p. 84. See Despois 1868, pp. 58 ff.

32 Vol. 1, p. 89.

of thought, they are the true good of society]. The Terror passes by as a period of dramatic sterility that can only be explained by deviant intention:

quelques hommes puissans s'étaient dit 'détruisons les savans, anéantissons la science'; elle contrarierait nos projets, elle ralentirait notre ambition; que la lumière s'éteigne, que les arts disparaissent ...³³

[some powerful men told themselves 'let's destroy the savants, let's annihilate science'; it countered our projects, it slowed our ambition down; so that the light goes out, so that the arts disappear ...]

Thus, reference to the Terror inaugurates the rationale of Neveu's judiciously structured programme, and by implication David's exclusion is written large across its pages. Alas, David's work is inscribed in the language of art – not because he was extraordinary, but because, like the other artists of his time, he chose his subjects, or his version of them, from the common knowledge of the educated élite, from the classical world or Corneille and Racine.

The general introduction to the work of the École lays out its overall objectives and the role that art will play in achieving them. The teaching of scientific knowledge will have two branches. One is mathematical analysis and its application to geometry and mechanics together, with descriptive geometry in its application to stereotomy, architecture and fortification. The other is general physics and chemistry. Drawing is to find its place in the first, not surprisingly, as, since the École Gratuite du Dessin, it has been closely tied to the practice of geometry as a scientific and moral underpinning of practical skills:

Le dessin s'y trouve joint, soit comme étant la description la moins rigoureuse, mais souvent la seule possible, des objets, soit comme l'art de gout.³⁴

[Drawing is a part of this, either as the less rigorous description, but often the only possible one, of objects, or as the art of taste.]

In effect this double formulation of function and taste articulates precisely the slippages between general and particular functions of art, between taste and feeling, social form and utility that I have been discussing. And its prob-

33 Vol. 1, p. 81.

34 Vol. 1, p. lv. See figure 7.

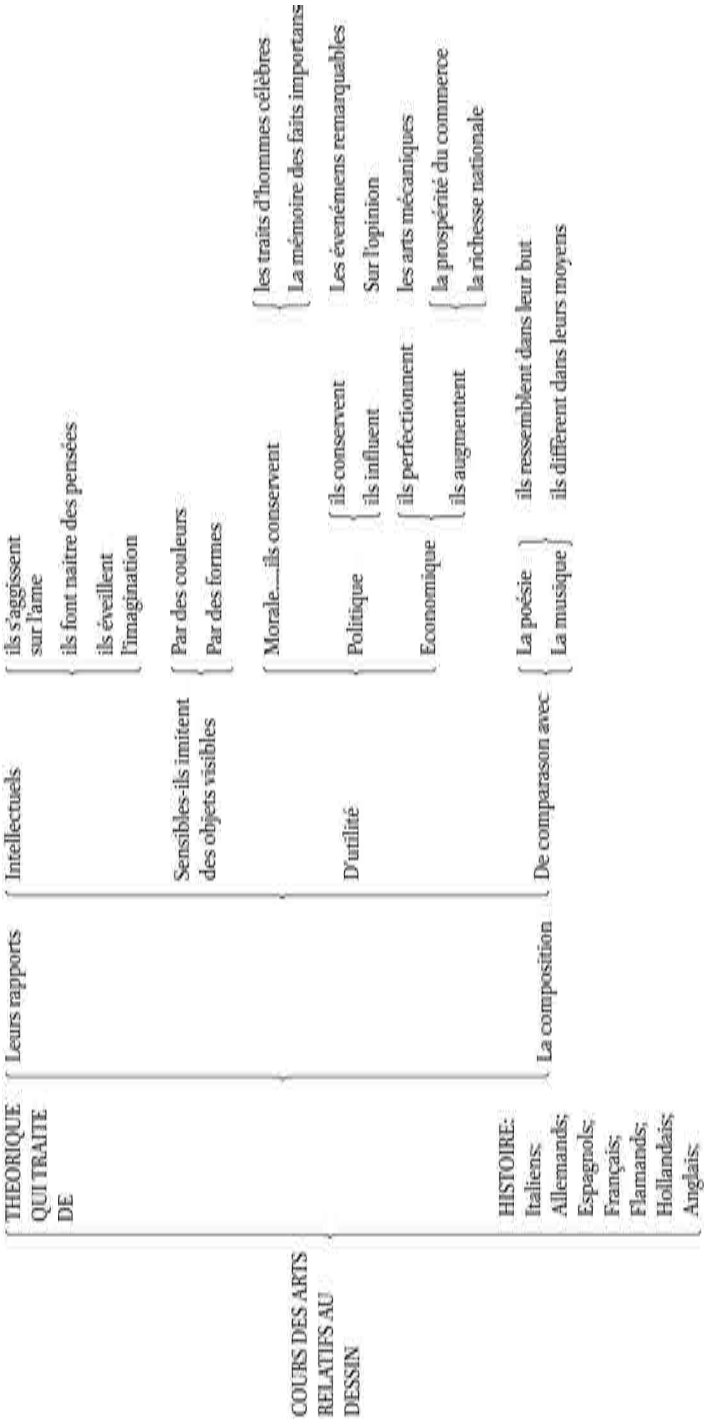


FIGURE 3 F.M. Neveu, upper half of diagrammatic representation of the courses in Drawing from the Journal Polytechnique. The lower half, not shown here, lays out the practical courses.

lems, because they are irresolvable in the abstract, will continue to plague the practice of specialised art teaching throughout the first decades of the Polytechnique.

For what emerges next is that the value attributed to art by the ideological heritage of Diderot, as the perfect combination of moral and affective pleasure, is both the reason why it must be taught in the École and the reason why it cannot be. For if art is to have a direct effect on the quality of the principal work in the school – military engineering – then it must be presented as a form of drawing that does not lead back to the production of artworks. And if this is not to lose the value of art as socially harmonious, then it must, nonetheless, appear as a form of *agrément*, or as leisure. The teaching of art or *dessin* is inferior to that of science in the École. It is the handmaiden, and it facilitates a speed-up of the appropriate aspects of learning in the other courses:

Sont avantage n'es pas moindre pour l'ingénieur civil que pour l'ingénieur militaire. Le premier a souvent aussi besoin de figurer un terrain, d'y indiquer les vallées, les montagnes, les cours des rivières ...³⁵

[They are of no less benefit to the civil engineer than for the military engineer. The first also often has need of sketching a piece of terrain, to indicate the valleys, the mountains, the course of rivers ...]

It also facilitates communication between different ranks and orders:

soit pour imaginer et faire connaître les machines de tout genre, soit enfin pour présider à des opérations, diriger les ouvriers, et suppléer, à l'aide de quelques lignes, ce que la parole ne leur ferait connaître ni aussi promptement, ni avec autant de précision.³⁶

[It is to imagine and to make known machines of all types, or finally to preside over operations, to manage the workers, and supply, with a few lines, what the word could make them understand either so quickly or with as much precision.]

This is in itself representative of a development or turn taken in the understanding of the word 'revolutionary', as Janis Langins has pointed out in her

35 *Cahier* 6, pp. 249–50.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 250.

important article *Words and Institutions during the French Revolution*.³⁷ Art is to play a role in the elaboration of what Langins calls a series of 'crash courses', but even as it is fulfilling this function, it must also give play to its difference, to its unassailable integrity as the ornament of society and the source of social virtue. Certain phrases such as 'moins onéreuses' reveal this ambivalent strategy, and by Year 7 Neveu formulated the situation as follows:

et le dessin, aux heures du soir qui y sont consacrées, peut être regardé comme un délassement des graves occupations de vos matins.³⁸

[and drawing, in the hours of the evening that are put aside to it, can be regarded as relaxation from the serious occupations of your mornings.]

Though here, in the end, one senses that Neveu is entrenching himself in a battle of his own to maintain the status of drawing in the École, even if he is not alone at this moment in proposing education as a respite from other kinds of work.³⁹ At the same time the value of drawing is that, as the basis of painting, it forms part of the core of a universal language:

La peinture parle avec les signes qu'elle a empruntés de la nature, comme la poésie avec les signes convenus qu'elle met un usage.⁴⁰

[Painting speaks with signs that it has borrowed from nature, like poetry with the conventional signs that it puts into play.]

So Neveu sets about teaching a scaled-down version of the integral academic theory and history of art, and in doing so reinstates the hierarchies of genres that had been so disrupted by the work of David. They are restituted as a social

37 Langins 1987.

38 Vol. 4, p. 341.

39 See especially the main authority on these topics, Antoine Léon, in particular Léon 1968, p. 27. Léon comments on Adam Smith as the proponent of education as a counter-effect to the stupefying results of specialisation, arguing that: 'Nous retrouverons cette conceptions dans le plan que Condorcet présentera à la Législative en Avril 1792'. The argument over the relation of general culture to specialised skill persists in the organisation of the teaching programmes of the École down to 1819–10 when a narrow interpretation of design skill comes to predominate. I am indebted to Susan Siegfried for her invaluable discussion of the role of military drawing of battlefields in the Napoleonic commissions.

40 *Leçon* 3, p. 346.

value at the heart of the teaching programmes for Travaux Publics, this jewel of the educational thinking of the Convention. In explaining the history of art, Neveu both overcomes the excesses of Wicar's interpretation of historical value, and elaborates an understanding of genre that effectively reformulates it as pure hierarchy in the teeth of David's highly charged uses. The lineages of art history, as he lays them out in the inaugural schema for his programmes, both include Flemish Dutch art and deploy them as a necessary part of his reflections on genre, which are crucial in establishing the social tone of the École and status of its students.⁴¹ Thus they have to be taught that a landscape by Paul Potter, insofar as it simply describes a meadow, a stream, cows, a willow and a young mother nursing her child, may be a legitimate object of pleasure for the viewer, 'qui lui rapellera quelques moments heureux' [that reminds him of some happy moments], even while 'elle ne demande pas plus de lumières' [she does not require too much enlightenment]. Ironically, although we are now worlds away from Wicar's executions, Neveu unconsciously confirms the lowliness of his own position as a teacher of drawing in the historical inferiority of his genre of painting. He is the advocate of a superiority to which he does not aspire, and he redefines another of the faultlines of affect.

However the same elements that demand so little in Potter become the substance of philosophy in a painting like Poussin's *Jérémie*, or through the articulation of a subject like *Bélisaire*. And it is here, in selecting the most readily recognised models for his students, that the effect of David's works begins to be felt in Neveu's languages, which is a model for a standard type of academic teaching language that has its origins with Lebrun. Of *Bélisaire*:

un vieillard majestueux, un enfant plein de grace, des personnages dans des attitudes qui marquent leur compassion, un beau site; tout cela porte un grand intérêt, même en ignorant les idées accessoires de l'ancienne grandeur du vieillard qui fait le sujet du tableau ...⁴²

[a majestic old man, a child full of grace, characters in attitudes that mark their compassion, a beautiful site; all this carries great interest, even without knowing the accessory ideas of the former grandeur of the old man who is the subject of the scene ...]

41 See Figure 3 for a schematic representation of this table. My thanks to Phil Eley for preparing this diagram.

42 *Cahier 1*, p. 117.

We can recognise all the figures of David's own treatment of the subject, but reduced to the condition of the paraphernalia. It is as if David's 'sérieux' is the nightmare of this dream. For what is at stake is the superiority of the historical genre as a value that can be secured without semantic weight other than that of the reference of its formulae to a set of social norms. That these themselves were being remade is a further complication. His discussion of *Socrate* is haunted in the same way, and in another example he comes close to David's *Brutus* in proposing a scene of family grief on the death of a son. Yet he does so in a way that, while it suggests undying value of patriarchy, proposes it as the knowing assemblage of a series of academic 'études' for a *concours* rather than a work of art addressed to an impassioned public.⁴³

on y verra la tristesse profonde d'une mère éplorée, la douleur amère d'une jeune femme qui perd un époux cheri, le chagrin, plus concentré, d'un père qui montre le courage de son sexe jusque dans les déchirements de son Coeur.⁴⁴

[we will see the profound sadness of a grieving mother, the bitter pain of a young woman who loses a darling spouse, the grief, more concentrated yet, of a father who displays the courage of his sex in the breaking of his heart.]

Reconstructing the genres and hierarchies ultimately means confronting the uses to which art had been put before and during the opening years of the Revolution and, especially, the period of the ascendancy of the Montagne, and reclaiming its means of expression as an apparently neutral, or transcendent whole. And, as it is founded, the new Institut becomes the site for this single category of art. In its control over prizes, education, theoretical discussion or the writing of the *Dictionnaire des Beaux-Arts*, the Institut comes to police the integrity of art whatever demands or claims are made upon its applications by all those different types of need that now develop apace within an ever-expanding division of labour and social interests. In the end, the high point of revolutionary ferment had disclosed that art cannot stand whole in the face of interest when interest is the site of the most violent political and ideological contention. After the idealised flush of democracy, disinterest and the state had

43 See Boime 1980; Duncan 1981 for the question of patriarchy in this context; as well as Crow 1985, Chapter 7, David and the Salon.

44 Ibid.

to take on each other's official disguise. Here, then, is an historiographical irony. The effect of rescuing David from the Revolution is also to reinstate disinterest as an exclusive value and to enshrine a conception of art that was only just emerging as specific and modern. And this ideological short-circuit could only occur after its conceptual continuity with its monarchical ancestry had been formally destroyed.

In laying out this complex set of institutional and linguistic materials, I have tried to show that, if 'différance' in language is mapped onto the movement of institutions and their capacity for exogamy, then the extent of David's *démarche* is disclosed afresh. As is the meaning of Wicar's phrase as trying to fix a representation back onto a referent to which it only really refers to the form of a revolutionary argument. The pinning back of reference becomes not only a necessity of the revolutionary process as with, for example, the *Fête de l'être Suprême*, but also a contestation of meaning in which the refounded Institut is both a contestant and a sign. The Institut, which David shunned, allows for the illusion of an old art to be re-established, because the dissolution of art into the revolutionary process had itself helped to loosen the divisions of labour obstructed by the old institutions and relationships. But this apparently old art is now at the node of new systems of power. Among other things, then, we could argue that the control of the Institut over art education is, in this sense, a representation of the limits of economic development, or is at least an aspect of their ideological/aesthetic appearance. The appearance of artists in this order of things is important, and none more so than that of David as the head of the French school.

Of course this pattern of struggle between institutions and economic processes is an ongoing one, which will reoccur throughout the nineteenth century, as the Institut, which had initially mopped up the revolutionary responsibilities of artists, becomes a 'fetter on the productive forces'. One of L.E.S.J. de Laborde's arguments, in which David is so crucial, is that the producers of Fine Art, the Academies and the democracy of art education for industry, should stay each in their proper sphere even while they affect each other. But if de Laborde sensed a chill in David the terrorist, he shared this frisson with the Baudelaire who was so deeply affected by his 'astre froid'. David then comes to represent the singularity of art, whether it be as a monstrosity or as its 'cold luminary'.

At the same time, as I have suggested, David conformed in much less obvious ways to the social relations of his time than those that can be articulated through the discussion of him in terms of a relation of art and politics in which both those terms are equally reified. Let us recall that a young woman, who was an actor in history, is absent from his greatest revolutionary work, the *Marat*, of which she was the cause. But that *woman* as an allegorical term in politics is

centrally present in the *Sabines*. And this painting, which is thus in step with the evolution of multiple significations of *woman*, also marks the endogamy of David back into the system of purely professional art. In his paying exhibition we can see how he vies for his place in the post-revolutionary making of private fortunes.

Conclusion

Inevitably, Jacques-Louis David tends to get lost in these considerations. I have tried to see if some of the discussions that have taken place around the figure of the 'artist' in nineteenth-century historiography have a role at this point in time and, if they do, what role the history of David can play in enlarging and underpinning them. For if we can try to take David in different situations or series, and, in each situation, follow the particularity of its logic, then it will ensue that we have a series of Davids. One such order is a given 'David' – David's politics – and a school of artists. The effect of David's actions, of his political beliefs and aesthetics is felt through the first decade of the Revolution from the spectacles of public life to the training of an Ingres. Another order is that of his insertion in the languages of art, their archeologies and their configurations throughout the institutional developments of the French state. Here David will be one of their effects, an artist who, in his revolutionary activity, is dispersed into the possible functions of the word 'art' in the political and social actions of his time. A third might be the pursuit of a logic of the utility of art that follows from these configurations and from some of David's actions, but in which he is nowhere present. Yet they cannot be fully understood without eliciting the specifics of his absence.

This dispersion must also be understood as itself a representation of fluidity of the word 'art' in the temporalities of its meanings. The reconstitution of David across this dispersion is one of the effects that transmutes art's words into the Art of our own time. To recover art from the Revolution, the authenticity of art from its diffusion, was it necessary to have more than a new Académie: to recover David, as hero or as villain, from the de-authoring effects of his own actions?

From Structure to Enigma and Back, Perhaps

This article arose out of a conversation with Jean-Louis Schefer following a seminar he had given at the University of Leeds on his work concerning the colour red in a painting of Paolo Uccello,¹ the Eucharist, the Jew and the ensemble of blood myths surrounding the Vampire. These themes, of aesthetics, literary and figural trace and theology typify his work and, in part, the ensemble of his interests, and they constitute an exercise in radical thinking beyond iconography, iconology and the historical truth values of evidence, proof or comparison. They are to be found in a number of different essays – I will return to these in due course.²

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1 Schefer 1999c.

2 Jean-Louis Schefer's bibliography is vast, and extends across a range of books, collections and uncollected essays in diverse journals. Here I give a number of basic references that are germane to this article. These include the three collections of essays Schefer 1998d, 1998a, and 1997a; and also three other books, 1988, 1995b and 1995c. Schefer is a noted contributor to film culture both in *Les cahiers du cinéma* and *Traffic*, although his thought remains less well known than that of Raymond Bellour or, more recently, Jacques Rancière. I am quite shocked at how few of his works I have really covered in this article in the end. I have not even touched on the books concerning single artists: Schefer 1999a, 2002, 1998c, 1995a; nor indeed the recent more synoptic Schefer 2004. An essay I especially like is his contribution, entitled 'La pudeur d'Adam', in Schefer 2001, where his writing is set alongside the theological approach of Henri Dominique Saffrey and Jean-Claude Lebensztejn's Jewish exegesis of images of this moment in genesis. Schefer's characteristic density is something that defies coverage and explication and invites rather an exploration of his own modes of scholarly procedure, a kind of mimetic critique. The renounced work at the heart of this essay is Schefer 1967 and I stick with it throughout. There is a compact exposition of some of the material from the seminar in Schefer 1995d. Here Schefer sets up alongside one another Aristotle's theory of red as 'an expansion that undoes the body' – there are no red surfaces in nature – with the tale of the desecration of the host in Uccello's predella of that name as two myths of origin that establish the enigma of red. Each scene of the predella is a haemorrhage of the 'first sign to be broken', tending to put back in place an unreproducible body of the beginning – Christ's body, but in what we can, ironically, see as a form of Augustine's understanding of the spiritual weakness of paganism in its figuring of a series of gods to represent each human trait. On p. 39 he shifts into the different register of red, and of critical-historical discourse, in the robe of the Rhenish Virgin, 'the most neutral and legitimate form is a cloth, a system of folds, a pure

I said to him how much I continued to admire his 1967 book *Scénographie d'un tableau*,³ a study that remains one of the most exhaustive and complex semiotic expositions ever undertaken of painting.⁴ He replied that he had no more to do with it and indeed thoroughly disliked it – a renunciation that is very evident in his *Artforum* article of 1997,⁵ 'Journey', an account of his critical life and writing in which it is not even mentioned – although the transformation of semiology in structuralism and the pleasures of *bricolage* is emphasised in its moment, in *Tel Quel* and the work of non-academic thinkers. Similarly, in his two collections of writing on art and literature, *Figures peintes* (1998) and *Choses écrites* (1998),⁶ there is hardly even a shadow of this passage through structuralism, even though his departure from it is densely set out in a critique of Claude Lévi-Strauss to be found in the latter, 'L'échange des animaux coupables'.⁷ Here he argues against oxymoronic and tautologous methodologies and for a conjunctural and specific understanding of the form of subject as a subject of law, of a particular form of Roman *ius*, rather than as the structured effect of an exchange. This substitution of a permutable and contingent matrix of sub-

strategy of space' (p. 41) (Musée de l'Oeuvre Notre-Dame). *Paolo Uccello: le Déluge* (Schefer 1999c) is another Uccello altogether, although again one in which the figure is suspended in an overriding colour, the red-brown of the walls of the whole scenario of the retreating water of the Deluge (Green Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence). In piecing these together it is worth citing quite a long passage from *le Déluge*, the opening paragraph on the mazocchio that surrounds the neck of the female figure at the lower left:

So the mazocchio is the only body that one constantly trips over, the one which in effect changes the writing of the species: it is an exception but more or less in that an enigma. It has the power to 'send back' the painting to the constant irresolution of its own position as a figure. It is at the same time the only thing that is susceptible to being understood [learned] in the painting; but the knowledge of this second object as it is set [enshrined] is fantasmatic: in the measure that it only 'figures' on the instance of that work which blurs another autonomy of art (p. 96; author's alternatives).

This in a sense represents Schefer's own work or 'art'.

3 Schefer 1967.

4 Alongside Schefer it is worth citing a list of writers who worked in or around *Tel Quel* and later *Peinture*, such as Jean-Louis Houbédine, Morse Peckham, Jack Burnham, the Marcel Duchamp of *Notes on the Large Glass*; although here we will just record the Louis Marin of *Sublime Poussin* (1995) and the Jean-François Lyotard of *Discours Figure* (1971). Prague school aesthetic linguists such as Matejka should also figure (see Matejka and Titunik (eds.) 1997).

5 Schefer 1997.

6 Schefer 1998a, 1998d.

7 Schefer (1998e [1976]).

jectifications, performances one should say, remains important for his writing, its singular poetic – the poetic of his scholarly and loving relation to the object. In conclusion to 'Journey' he writes that:

The final utopia is not a system (ordered, progressive, moving toward the finality of a philosophy of history). Nor is it a network of analogical connections (as Warburg dreamed of). And it's not some vague project of writing down the world's fragments, captivated by their poetic force or their intellectual stimulation. Rather, it's a work in progress, something that picks up on all the world's metaphors. So the horizon of our work is not some system that might one day close up – it's an open continent, a sort of cartography. Proust's work gives a good idea of this kind of infinite junction of metaphors, where everything is simultaneous.⁸

If he turns from both order and its finality – as well as from what might be hoped from analogy – then I understand his rejection of *Scénographie*. It is and always was a strange piece of writing; a repressed frenzy in its calculating systematics, cold, formal and ambitious in its conquest of the complex relations between sign, significance and historical moments in the conjuncture of the painted figure. Largely it explores a single painting, Paris Bordone's *Chess Players* (1540), but with a short, comparative excursus on one other image, the more famous Fontainebleau double portrait of *Gabrielle d'Estrée et la Duchesse de Villars* (1594) in which one woman takes the other's nipple with the same gesture as that with which one of the chess players lifts a pawn. The inversion of the position of the hand from horizontal to vertical, from lifting to pinching, is clearly a form for a figure that is both paradigmatic and particular and which, therefore, within the systems of structural linguistics, constitutes a crucial moment around which the endless and complex processes of establishing binary lexemes – inside/outside, nature/culture, power/subjection, surface/depth, etc. – can be swung around and over each other on axes of difference and superposition, in such a way as finally to read what is symbolised as well as what is shown.

Hence the comparative chapter is important in the forming of the central argument which is concerned, as Schefer puts it in the preface, with the following: 'If the painting can be analysed in terms of system without being a

8 Schefer 1997b. The main collectors and transmitters of Schefer in English have been Stephen Bann and Paul Smith, whose translations of Schefer in *The Enigmatic Body* (Schefer 1995) remain the only viable collection of his writings to be translated. This quotation is from the article in *Artforum* – translated by Paul Smith and downloaded from Smith's website with acknowledgements for his generous public offering.

language, this is also because what it *represents* is not what it “figures”;⁹ and the irruption of a second image both confirms, distends and dissolves the findings that precede it. While this space or difference between the represented and the figure remains part of the thematic material of his writing, as in the red or Uccello essays, it precisely no longer forms an axis of a series of structurally determined exchanges. It is, above all, exchange that must disappear as the manifestation of an immanent order.

Yet the transubstantiation of semiology into image and back that *Scénographie* undertook made for a complex and complicated text, thoroughly sadistic as a discourse on the image and in its use of rhetoric. If it appealed so strongly, this is probably because of the situation in which *Scénographie* appeared to me. I will not attempt to give more than an outline of the overall flow of the book, which shifts between elaborate exposition and reprises in the form of glossary – a language was being disclosed, and reading it was in some respects and for this comparable with encountering Peter Wollen’s *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (1969). That structures, lexemes or semic flows of one shape or another, within and beyond the image may, once disclosed, occlude what had brought them into visibility, certainly gave the process an aporetic character: I would say as much aporetic as tautological, tacking here and there rather than a mere short circuit. Anyway, my own attempt to think through the book, in both meanings of that phrase, was shaped in using it to discuss their work with fine art students in the early 1970s – something that may or may not have been a thankless thing to have attempted. In all probability, trying to teach Schefer’s impossible book was something that could have made sense only in an art school in the early 1970s, in the company of constructivist artists and other severe practitioners, many of them steeped in a complicated mixture of Claude Lévi-Strauss’s then new *La pensée sauvage* (1962), the Noam Chomsky of *Cartesian Linguistics* (1966), Charles Biederman’s theories of visual knowledge in *Art as the Evolution of Visual Knowledge* (1948),¹⁰ Richard Paul Lohse’s structuralist painting, John Cage’s *Indeterminacy* and general systems theory after Norbert Wiener, as well as late Adorno and early Marx – impure *bricolage* in search of a pure figure, via (non)representation, before the interdictions of poststructuralism were to fall.¹¹ The relation between system and chance as a

9 Schefer 1967, p. 7; emphasis in original.

10 Lévi-Strauss 1962; Chomsky 1966; Biederman 1948.

11 Much of this eclectic jumble is a memory – however inaccurate – of discussions and teaching with the painter Jeffrey Steele and the group of artists shown at the Systems exhibition, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 1972 (see the eponymous catalogue with an introduction by Stephen Bann). I intend to exaggerate the extreme incompatibility of the

perceptible trace that could be thought of as somehow sublimed *in* the artwork was figured as an utopian potential of thinking and making, as a character of beauty in art itself, in its formal and figural elaboration. With its complex orderings of the visible, *Scénographie* was a possible guide to how one might think about this presence, at the same time a residuum and an essence of a practice, in whatever medium and without reducing one to another.

Thinking about all of this today also entails thinking about Maoism, or the 'moment' of *Tel Quel*: different but imbricated phenomena with strangely unpredictable futures. Yet it is liable to generate an Edenic longing for one of theory's many infancies; something that is, of course, only to be reproached, as must be any yearning for an origin. But that cannot be helped. Much has been published on the history and fate of structuralist thinking, and here it is rather this oddity of the future of the then present than a history that I want to indicate. After all, in the same year that *Scénographie* was published, Jacques Derrida made his fundamental critique of the Saussurean certitudes that underpinned it in his famous interview with Julia Kristeva: a strange superposition in itself that, somehow in its polynarrative perversity, seems only to bear out the Lévi-Straussian notion of an infinitude of interweaving myth(eme)s.¹² Really the narrowness of the space between the two events, which is little more than a few pages of *Tel Quel*, should imply that they both continue to exist for thinking to have a future.

Yet in the event, the future of Derrida's even more systematic and manipulative critique of Lévi-Strauss in *De la grammatologie* (1967) was to ensure that this would not be largely the case,¹³ and that *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) would become the villain of a certain theoretical history as it became entrenched in the universities.¹⁴ Taken from behind by what I see as Derrida's own abuse of the notion of *différance*, in making that concept into the position before discourse from which all Lévi-Strauss's discursive strategies could be a priori invalidated, the values of his writing, its textual belonging to the time, were largely effaced; and this despite Derrida's entirely more sympathetic critique of *bricolage* and positive evaluation of a later Lévi-Strauss – *Le cru et le cuit* (1964) and *La pensée sauvage* (1962) – in his *Écriture et différence* (1967).¹⁵ By the 1980s, in institu-

models within structuralist thinking to underline a certain poetic of the desire for system. Politically, this could fall in any direction of course, and I would hesitate to measure the inclination of Schefer's text.

12 Derrida 1972.

13 Derrida 1967a.

14 Lévi-Strauss 1955.

15 Lévi-Strauss 1964 and 1962; Derrida 1967b.

tional terms – in the university – *bricolage* and theoretical experiment were to be overwhelmed by textbook explication and doxa, a kind of prissy eclecticism or syncretism, invariably abetted by the short-circuitry of Luce Irigaray's incisive wit in her critique of the great structuralist (monster) in *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (1971),¹⁶ and despite the ongoing, radical effects of feminist and queer interventions in the question of exchange from the later 1970s.¹⁷

Yet in the face of Schefer's renunciation one could say that it was as if *Scénographie* had chosen its proper readers already, and despite him; we have little reason to conceal it as a stratum in our own archaeology, on account either of the author's rejection or of his modesty or the subsequent fate of structuralism. For within its reading, whether from a practice of art or of teaching, it had contradictory and overdetermined effects, even something like that of realising *différance* in the crazed pursuit of its finalities, its very systematics generating an excess of enigma and only improbable resolutions. Being invited to contribute an essay to a celebratory volume for Schefer gave me an opportunity to hold him to the *Scénographie* by whatever means I could, and in that sense to preserve an element of intellectual history as well as to look again at how, in some important respects, the problem of visual culture is a problem that never was.

For if Schefer's book was first and foremost an intervention in the field of the theoretical and linguistic understanding of the complexity of the artwork, it was conceived of neither as an art-historical discourse – although it sometimes refers to such a discipline – nor as a replacement for one of the kind that visual culture has pretended later to be, at least in some of its guises. The radical structuralist elaboration and intrication of the image with the words that fill it – which is neither an iconography nor an iconology – words that name and unpick the image's parts, which are already too multifarious and heterogeneous properly to be named, the chiasmic relation of the words and the image, rhetoric, grammar and procedure in their mutual constitution and undoing; these processes make for something that is neither word nor image as such, neither visual in a sense restricted or delimited by the nature of the object – a Venetian painting – nor something demanding that different forms of narrativity – visual/verbal – need to be brought into being as the terrain from which each will finally signify its specificity or difference. Significantly, Schefer achieved

16 Irigaray 1971.

17 Derrida 1972; Dosse 1991–2. The Kristeva interview dates to the Linguistics Conference, 1967. The obvious feminist intervention that took exchange elsewhere without renouncing it is Elizabeth Cowie's 'Woman as Sign' (2000), and in queer studies Kosofsky Sedgwick 1985.

this with a relatively minor work, far removed from the canon of great Bellinis, Titians or Veroneses, although his writing bears some resemblances to Julia Kristeva's equally dense thinking on Giotto or Bellini, in their preoccupation with the limits of discourse and our understanding of what moves discourse and of how it moves. Schefer indicates this in a footnote to the Appendix of *Scénographie*¹⁸ and the unities and discontinuities in her work over the last 37 years make an interesting comparison with his own.

So, in the introduction to *Figures peintes*, Schefer comes to remark that works of art choose us as much as we choose them – something that is already implicit in Kristeva's notions of excess and hypercathexis – but then Schefer is *not* a psychoanalytic thinker but one of the 'world's images'. Images choose us, he states, neither in search of our 'explanation nor an estimation of their value', but of dialogue: 'through figures, they present us enigmas with which we dialogue'.¹⁹ It is in setting the image and himself as uneven equals that the logic of *Figures peintes* (a chronological collection of his work on painting from 1962 to 1996) is one of distance and ellipsis in which he puts a distance between himself and the system of critical inquiry that was high structuralism. As I have suggested, this is evident in the selection itself, as apart from the very first piece that he published, the 1962 'Watteau' and an entry in the *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, 'Cimabue' (1969), the period of *Scénographie* is missing. The selection gets going again in the later 1970s, by which time Schefer has published 'L'échange des animaux coupables'.²⁰ In effect this is a highly political essay and also inscribes his thinking in a field that includes, at various stages, Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben in their different facings of subject in community and as a trace. And yet the very notion that an object may choose is far from alien to that of the gaze as *objet*.

I am arguing that if he – like so many of the thinkers around *Tel Quel*, once high structuralists – came to be thought of as rather paradigmatic of the post-modern, then this was not so much on account of the great renunciation in itself but also something to do with the oddities of structuralism as they became more evident, and as they had already been hypostatized in his writing as well as that of Lévi-Strauss. If he renounced the mastery of system, which may be seen as a postmodern motif, and if *Scénographie* hardly offered the promise of enigma in its opening pages, it was a brilliant thread in the tissue of new knowledges that established the notion of a signifying object that necessarily could

18 Schefer 1967, p. 203.

19 Schefer 1998a, pp. 7–8.

20 Schefer 1998e [1976].

not but foreground its enigmatic character exactly in the quality and intensity of the attentions that it demanded. Nor, as we will shortly see, did his renunciation foreclose on Schefer's using the word *scénographie*; nor indeed, as I have suggested, on what happens between a reader and the text when the reader is chosen by it. Freed from the constraint of the structuralist moment as from its poststructural and postmodern (terms that at last have acquired a deserved redundancy) aftermath, the Schefer, along with the contemporary texts of a Barthes or a Kristeva, for example, can be seen for its particular luminosity, both belonging to and going beyond the moment, even as it was written. The urgencies were immense, finding words to tell other words and words proper to images untranslatable into words, against the background demand for a political clarity that might as well be invested in a militant demand as in ideology-defying rhetorical austerity. In these circumstances this complicated approach to the relation between a primary, nominal or descriptive discourse of the *Chess Players* and a second discourse of its parts began to meet the criterion of a discourse itself articulating the constructive-negative as an intellectual politics:

The second discourse signifies the first (and simultaneously suspends the signified of the first) discourse; it is that which, through this double ground, gives depth to the painting: this depth, I would insist, is not a depth of sense, but of the system.²¹

It suited perfectly, this highly elaborate and formal, dense process of ordered speculation on the very possibility of pictorial signification: quite what it is, which element in a series holds it, where it might occur through the many ellipses of linguistic theory, its system and discourse on and in the object. It made part of a genealogy of intellectual experience, one where, importantly, the making of a painted surface or an object was as much a vector as were words. Schefer's text belonged here and was appropriated willy-nilly in a way that both embraced and defied its spirit, even as he renounced it – and if it does indeed have an afterlife, then this is *as if it too* were a work of art. In its own potential for enigma it joins the mysterious and sometimes involuntary irrationalities of structuralist art itself, in the way that they too conjoin the aleatory fields of making and of viewing in something that we could also call a gaze.

The subsequent scenographies of Schefer's work are multiple, they are the scenes of the cinema, of medieval devotional art as well as paleolithic painting, of Dutch and French still life and architectural views, of mythology, folk tale

21 Schefer 1967, p. 50.

and theology in their intertwining, of colour itself, of literature and of their intertextuality. It would be possible to write an essay just on the title of each of his three (now four) major collections of essays, *Figures peintes* (1998), *Choses écrites* (1998) and *Images mobiles* (1998).²² Each of these in its own way playfully and confoundingly succumbs to the specific but complex charges of image, text or cinema in such a way as to unsettle the nature of the object, its framings and its capacity to make meanings so that it is now it, the object itself, that promises language the semiotic depth that semiotics once appeared to have offered it. Each volume charts both the efflorescence and mutual contamination of Schefer's principal subjects, and traces the dispersal of *his* being a writer across the knowledges with which these subjects overwhelm him, in their gaze. In *Choses écrites*, for example, the essay entitled 'Dracula, le pain et le sang' (1998) temporarily arrests his thinking around the colour red,²³ the Eucharist and the Augustinian body, to isolate the principal thematic materials – if to do so, hierarchically, is not already the abuse of explication. For the method itself is not hermeneutic.

Between the red of Uccello's *Miracle of the Desecrated Host* (Urbino, 1465–89), the *marron* of the *Deluge* (1447–8) and another red of the 15th-century, this time the red robe of the Rhenish *Virgin in a Garden* (1479) in *Question de style* (1995),²⁴ the colour becomes an anachronistic thing, set loose in its various appearances – or apparitions – both across time and within the organisation of individual images; it is neither a colour nor a theme, but an anamorphic object: one that takes on the shapes and modes of figurality in the superposition of meanings that it enables, apart from chronology, determining structure or fixed arrangement. The essay 'Dracula' witnesses the traces of such an object, and traces its forms in film, literature, painting and theological histories. Schefer indeed enacts his own proposition in the introduction to *Choses écrites*:

But these languages, these improbable reasonings, these indirect and poorly argued thoughts (these demonstrations of retouching [repentance]²⁵ that *all texts make*) are also my own; they build the meager surface yet perhaps the only link that attaches us to all other men: we all speak the same languages, we all speak of the impropriety of our desires and their stubbornness about objects that soon disappear.²⁶

22 Schefer 1998a; 1998d; and 1998b.

23 Schefer 1998f.

24 Schefer 1995c.

25 *Repentir*, the French word used here, has a dual meaning of 'repent' or 'retouch'.

26 Schefer 1998d, pp. 7–8; emphasis added.

Surface, which might be the connective power of text, is none other than image in the sharing of something which is not in effect difference, but a certain minimum that is envisaged through 'retouching'. It is easy enough to see how this writing as such stands uneasily in the face of a post-Derridian model of what writing may mean.

So, in the astonishing coda of *Du monde et du mouvement des images*,²⁷ as Schefer brings together The Joker from Tim Burton's *Batman* (1989) with Francis Bacon's *Figure with Meat* (1954), each member of this abusive and tentative *rapprochement* takes on the other's surface as an unexpected depth, which becomes the depth of the book itself; although up to this point the names which have punctuated and filled his discourse have been Valéry, Wells, Poe, Leopardi, Hoffmann, Rimbaud or Nerval. Bacon, then Burton and The Joker lead the paradoxical elaborations of time in the image and of the image in time, '[the] infinite vibrating in a closed room', the long spans of a Vician historical temporality, to a space slightly apart from or beside their canonical resonances in Catholic historiography.²⁸ And in consequence the film's play between the 'dreary' Batman and The Joker, who proceeds from being a Balzacian provincial on-the-make to the pure 'Néron-artiste' of communication's narcissistic parthenogenesis – a passage that Schefer engages with a dizzying imagination – becomes a curiously lighthearted parable or figure for something quite terrible of which we had been warned at the very beginning of the book: that the recognition of our civilisation's mortality and the fact that it (the purloined letter) had been before our eyes all the time, are revelations of the same order. Now for Schefer the scenographies have come to be the substance and method of his writing rather than its object, and in this dispersion of substantiality between what had been subject and object the body of his thinking has become the very process that he once wished to master, map, explain through semiotic theory; the urgencies of this in the elliptical metonymies of body, atoms, time, the filmic and the paleolithic body are to seize on a new moment in the figurality of the human, temporarily, no more:

Let's consider this paradox à la Diderot: a character invented out of play, made entirely dependent on fiction, on the suggestion of reality, on the modulations of action, all of them impossible, produced the invention of the spectator. An extraordinary inducement of imaginary behaviours, the invention of the spectator did not succeed in becoming a sociological object: it is a science-fiction novel entirely unto itself.

27 Schefer 1997a, p. 67.

28 Schefer 1997a, p. 89.

But, what does it still mean – Poe, Valéry, Wells and Einstein in cinema – this quite Platonic fable of an end of the world of which there only remains (and for whom?) specks of images, that is, specks of matter dancing in the void of some universes? The figure.²⁹

The realisation of this disturbance also sustains my holding Schefer to his book of 1967; the knowledges of *Scénographie* are still needed, if only to be undone, whose undoing is one measure of a text. This passage I have just quoted is intense in exactly such a precision, as each word tends to designify its context through a series of refined but weak catachreses: ‘produced the invention’: ‘quite Platonic’: ‘end’ with ‘remains’: ‘matter’ singular with ‘universes’ plural, and so on. It is as if the second discourse, in arriving, now signals only the frailty of the chain rather than the system’s strength. If semiotics was before, figure is after – what is left over after signification, but figure is also always present. In any event such as that of the flow of reds in Uccello³⁰ or in the imbrication of the Virgin’s red robes in different levels of her surroundings (1995),³¹ we are left with Schefer’s *fiction* and its economies:

I value this fiction for its economy: it sends a motif of irrigation from the figurative space onto the idea of a figurative ‘quantity’ and offers, in an abrupt way, some myths of origin or fables of the engendering of the color (red): on their own they cast onto the last figure, the Rhenish Virgin that I am attempting to approach. They reach it from afar through these two intertwined motifs that are the blood of women and the blood of Christ.³²

This is to say that the fictional nature of the suppositional process enables him to envision an economy of the colour (red) in which its flow as colour and as blood ensures, eventually, the liaison of heresy and religious practice in that of painting itself. At least, he insists, his ‘sentimental fiction’ recognises the ordering of an affect. If this writing is neither ‘social’ nor ‘psychoanalytic’, neither ‘formalist’ nor ‘aestheticising’, then it is engaged in the resituating of those materials with which these terms or approaches have tried to treat with the enigma of affect.

29 Schefer 1997a, pp. 22–3.

30 Schefer 1995c, p. 73.

31 Schefer 1995e.

32 Schefer 1995c, p. 82.

In his 1993 essay on Warhol, 'Papier bonbon' (1998),³³ a title that recalls a childhood figure of Warhol himself and that yields the acidity of the piece, Schefer wrote with something more of a political urgency and vitality, addressing his material as something charged and saturated by historical, social and aesthetic movements, yet he is still undone in the face of their overflowing energies; energies that force the affect of the surface figure to transgress the taxonomic rules of the old semiology and/or political recognition alike. So if in 'L'échange des animaux coupables' he settled his accounts rather from the borderlands of a structuralist problematic, 17 years later he resigns himself to the enigma of signification rather than controlling the figure of critique – a culmination in the acceptance of the random relation between knowledge and affect, arrived at in a reading whose disclosures reiterate, each time newly discovered, what it is that cannot fully be named:

Maybe this latecomer dandy, nevertheless so distant from our Baudelairean knowledge, recalls this knowledge of the abyss as surface, as pause, as fabric of illusions. I was not thinking that I would be led here in these lines. In any case, perhaps this effect saves us from the refrain of commodities; it is this theatre, this empty stage, the awaiting stage, the sour candy drop lighting and the hanging straps. The *Scenographics*: this one is Wagnerian, that one is burlesque, another escapes from a draft of a novel, spewed out by a rotary press: game around the nullity of life ...

Warhol's narcissism, passivity (the coquettishness of bad taste), or image make no difference: they led to something that burns, that wrinkles. The very short distance separating the image from the image of the real. Men seized in the process of crossing the surface of human life. Men, things, surfaces in their catastrophic arrangements, the condition of their fitting together, of their fitting exactly into each other. These are nothing but images? This is what images are.³⁴

If what images are is nothing but images, or if this nothing-but is what images are, it is hard to fully disaggregate the grammatical ambiguity. And the image of Warhol, the candy paper one, is the crumpling of the surfaces for and as catastrophe, because of which, and in the recognition of its indifference, another surface, the surface of human life, is to be seen. In these spaces, between

33 Schefer 1998f.

34 Schefer 1998a, pp. 300–1.

the scenographics of Warhol's disasters (the electric chair, the car crash, the Kennedy assassination), Schefer has to say this, 'that I did not think I would be led here'; and somewhere between salvation from the commodity's old tunes and the surface as an abyss, a pause – between passive seduction as a saving and the abyss as what we see, between 'ce ne sont', 'ce que sont' and antinomy of Schefer's own making, Warhol's art and Burton's *The Joker* can recognise each other in the deferred action of Baudelaire's knowledge of the 'surface as an abyss'. Warhol, the 'latecomer dandy', brings before us the anterior knowledge of Baudelaire's discovery as again our most immediate knowledge, which is also that of the borderline states of word and word and word and image and images among themselves, 'men, things, surfaces'. Here *Scénographie*, or rather what it had once mapped, is both a trace and a substance, where the materiality of art slides as a palimpsest of its enigma, and the kinds of knowledge that have made such an enigma visible at all.

Louis Marin refers to Schefer in one of the early essays of his *Sublime Poussin*.³⁵ This is in his discussion of an initial descriptive 'telling' that takes place 'by design' on the 'pictorial surface':

Once described the painting loses its status as an object and becomes a text on which successive readings are deposited. Are these successive readings – which constitute the pictorial text-object itself, at least to a certain extent, infinite in number? ... And does the painting of the meaning not lie in this disordered displacement of discourse throughout its readings?³⁶

Writing under the immediate impact of *Scénographie*, Marin seems to be coping with its fallout, with its unsurpassable character – precisely that character which calls for Schefer's own renunciation. For incongruously, and despite the precision of Marin's sentence structure, it does seem to follow that if the 'pictorial text-object' is only 'to a certain extent' these readings, then their possible infinitude is rendered partial or conditional – a rhetorical, catachrestic realising of the aporia engendered by a type of theoretical discourse that risks treating the naming of specific signs in the framework of an absolute generality of their potentially unlimited signifying chains. An aporetic which, as I have noted, uncannily points to Walter Benjamin's slowness, to the trap embedded in the denotative strategies that drive him to the discovery of ever more frag-

35 Marin 1995.

36 Schefer 1995, p. 30.

ments of an ever-more unnameable system or structure of historical being. We can see here the motif to depart from Lévi-Strauss, who behaves as if this were not the case even as he acknowledges infinitude, knowing as we do, that naming (rather than marking a point of rest or silence) is the moment of *différance* itself.

For it is just this indecipherable relation, which is in part one of the 'text-object's' autonomy, of its being excess, to its readings, however many of them may be undertaken, or to its semiotic character, that sets it outside the travails of deconstruction. And it is just such an indecipherable-ness that returns us to quite reduced or concentrated particularities as a consolation for the loss engendered by even a partial infinity. (This too is a problem made vivid by Yves Bonnefoy in his *Notes sur la couleur*,³⁷ and it is probably not the question of the fold in Deleuze.) It is in his *La lumière et la table: dispositifs de la peinture hollandaise* (1995),³⁸ with the partial objects such as a lemon peel, that Schefer will find a lyrical space between allegory and denotation; in the misshapen, reformed exterior of the interior of a natural object, which is the subject and the object of human desire, whether that desire be for a refreshment or a meaning. Oddly again, this intensity will escape through a description of some paintings by Schalken that Schefer is actually setting aside, as secondary in his discussion; writing of the lemon, 'the yellow of its skin and its white lining, the translucent appearance of its flesh against the flesh of the oyster'.³⁹ These half-rapt phrases only arrive after he has declared ambivalently that these paintings 'restrict somehow the enigma of the lemon through the attestation of a use; however, they leave intact the hypothesis of an otherwise allegorical usage'. It is as if an object may never be left, nor finally set aside, even in a text where, in utter distinction to *Scénographie*, it is the multiplicity of objects that exceed the text.

So if Marin, in that seeming lapsus, was going beyond Schefer, *Scénographies*'s previous understanding of the complex condition that is to 'a certain extent' the object itself, but in infinite displacement, was wholly necessary in order to build upon and then surpass both the semiology and iconography of painting and so shift out into a terrain where they overlap and interact without ever touching each other in the form of a closure or a conclusion. It is important to underline this, as it was certainly not through Derrida's critique of structuralism that he was to arrive at a satisfactory writing of the visual arts – the passages on Adami in the otherwise extraordinary displacements of *La vérité*

37 Bonnefoy 1968.

38 Schefer 1995b.

39 Schefer 1995b, p. 76.

en peinture (1978) are probably amongst the weakest that he was ever to publish.⁴⁰ The object-construct that is Schefer's constellation of red in his work on Uccello is hypothetically a kind of object made possible by his reluctant resting with *Scénographie*'s own cruel and sadistic tracking of the image, the *Chess Players*, through the polydimensional structures of the board, the chequered floor, nature/culture and the rules of language, where excess always runs ahead, around and before – despite the controlling system. The red and the stories of Dracula are neither a case of 'interdisciplinary' thinking nor of difference. Rather they register a disclosure of meaning that can only occur in the transgression of the *logic* of different knowledges, through a methodology that has itself become a deposit of the utter (and ab-original) impossibility of their discreteness.

If *Scénographie* was a master discourse of over-interpretation, tormenting the paintings to yield the secrets of their figurality, then in the excess of its sadistic procedure it put itself beside the supreme rationality that it set itself as a goal. In the convoluted and arcane elaborations of a field of inexhaustible difference, now 'structural', 'structuring' or 'merely denotational', it had already become both a possible poetic *and* a poesis of theoretical and aesthetic writing. When, in conclusion to the chapter 'Supplément', Schefer wrote that:

It is manifest, we have seen it by the way, that the two games are brought together in our painting, (we find there, as it were, the 'two species' in one) the chess board appears as the synecdoche of the painting: it is from the play of numbers that a moralisation of the world is produced.⁴¹

it is exactly our difficulty in sustaining an intellectual stability in the face of the mapping of such discrepant categories, the one onto the other in the density of the system, that excites a muted sublimity. The modulation of the argument between the 'as it were', the 'synecdoche' and the 'moralization' – that is to say, between the metaphors of argument, the technical and rhetorical displacement and concentration of the whole meaning and ethical understanding of the figural relations – stretches reading between understanding and imagination. It was itself a powerful figure for the spaces then opening up between the precipitous struggles of Kantian procedure and the quasi-infinite mappings of the structural turn.

This approach to Schefer's renunciation suggests how we might still hear the rustling of his text alongside that of Barthes, all the more perversely as its

40 Derrida 1978.

41 Schefer 1967, p. 144.

theoretical apparatus might also remind us of the table of waiting implements that so strikes Barthes in his writing on Sade; the table itself is a metaphoric for the space between theory and the object in *Scénographie*, or a staging post of the relation between a 'science' of the thing/body and a poetic of its using, but also for the connection between intensive and extensive knowledges. One of the curious things about Schefer's intensity is that it explodes into the encyclopaedic, as if Condillac had constructed the whole of his *De l'art d'écrire* on a single trope rather than from a compendium of words, images, social situations and their long term *historia*; or as if Longinus had extrapolated a poetic from a couple of lesser verses rather than from Homer and a lost fragment of Sappho. Sebastien Bordone had little importance before Schefer was chosen by his *Chess Players*, and his non-canonical status remains a challenge to subsequent developments in the field of a theoretically reflexive history of art and visual culture and to how they are written. *Scénographie* remains a historic *tour de force* in the hypertrophic realisation of the object's undoing, the dissolution of two paintings in the structures of an immense peri-phrasis of which they, in the end, had been nothing but the occasion, but from which they escape intact. Bordone is apt to meet Burton in Schefer's later work.

The later writing is then marked by a fate rather than by a logic. Schefer establishes a new kind of object relation, mutually amorous, established in the energies that the object discharges through his writing. The old Sadean–Cartesian framing of 'I think, therefore it is' has yielded to a de-focused enchantment, one rendered material in grammar, in unfolding the movements of its revelation; precision and uncertainty or, rather, an aporetic curiosity intertwine to produce at once a 'scholarship effect' and the mirage of a different plenitude. This scenography of text and image-figure is possibly at its most vivid in *La lumière*, where the writing is overwhelmed with paintings, drawings, details, each in their own particularity demanding to be written on a borderline between description and allegorical analysis:

This poetics of the Dutch world, gathered in little subjects, is irresistible: it is introductory; it operates an extraordinary cleansing of pictorial bombast on us; it still responds to a taste for measure and balance. I believe it comes close to constituting an ethic of objects and manner; more than an exercise ('describe what you see') it corresponds to a programme of style.⁴²

42 Schefer 1995b, p. 48.

It is not just the poetic apprehension that needs to be underlined here, that would be sentimental, for the word 'style' has a profound materiality in Schefer's thinking. To understand this is to see how he makes a quite incisive break into signifying something that, in more conventional discussions, we would call modernity, but in twisting its historical shape and temporalities out of any recognition, least of all as a dogma of cultural theory. If Uccello's red lies both before and behind Bram Stoker or Tim Burton, then we can begin to see how Manet's lemon peel in his *Déjeuner dans l'atelier* (1868) is not so much one of modernity's starting points as an ethical contemporary of the Dutch lemon in use in their common betrayal of the ground of allegory, even if with Manet the use is more the use of the 'painter who paints' than that of the figure who might put 'it' in 'his' tea. The designifying of the allegorical and symbolic in the act of painting itself is the surface of an ethic neither within the teleology of a discourse about the object nor within the objectives of a discipline.

Reading another reader overwhelmed by her object leads me to offer a conclusion in the form of constructing an objet à la Schefer. I think of one, and only one of Mme de Sévigné's letters to her daughter – that alas I can no longer find – but that it is an imperative to carry on reading and reading again. It is a correspondence that here, as in 'Waiting and Seeing',⁴³ haunts me as a kind of inappropriate ego ideal insofar as I might ever have an addressee other than a general figure of academic propriety. Rendered inconsolable as usual by the distance that divides them and that provokes the letters – although distance is not necessarily an impulse to the epistolary – Sévigné writes that her one possible comfort is the knowledge that the same moon shines on both of them. There is the beginning of an object, a map of France in the late 17th century, the linear geometry that connects her to the shabby Chateau de Grignan, with its shining, sunny parterres: the accidents of the countryside that impede her couriers from flying as swift as birds; a slight difference in latitude that means the moon will never be at just the same inclination to either of them, or the passage of a cloud or a storm, or the reading of a letter deferred to a moonless night; the consolation of togetherness can never be more than that of mourning its impossibility, as a structure.

Centuries later, the same consoling optative is voiced in quotidian culture, the popular culture of the seaside, repeated here and there across and along the shorelines of postwar England, in the pleonasm that was the provincial entertainment of the seaside resort; before mass access to television, cold

43 Rifkin 2003.

before mass travel to the south, wrapped in rugs and anoraks, waiting for the fireworks to begin, they sing:

I see the moon,
the moon sees me
through the branches of the great oak tree.
Oh please let the light that shines on me,
shine on the one I love.

Different tones, imperious longing, anxious invocation of good weather for the fireworks, both specifying the single line between you and me, the generalised performance of a general idea of love in the time of the gramophone and radio, waiting for no response other than the gratification of the fireworks. Between them, in time and cultures, they begin to complete the circuits of the subject's incompleteness, an introversion or a narcissism that mourns being never fully chosen, either together or alone. Such a disposition of voices, gestures, texts, illuminations; it is this that begins to shape the object, a surface that connects as if there might yet be structure, but only in the travails of contingency; an object-surface that, in its dispersal through times of cultural form both activates and subdues difference – yet without the comforts of sameness. The object, one could say, is nothing more than the process of the subject being chosen, the enigma of two particularities which lose themselves in their asymmetry. The object-surface as this conjunction and disjunction – I am avoiding matrix, web or rhizome – has as its substance metonym and synecdoche, like the abyssal surface of Warhol's disasters. Timely and untimely, such an object may well choose us, beside and despite a teleology or systems of spatial and temporal certainty. The subject chosen, like Augustine's present, is both now and never (it is now or never), full, distended, for immeasurably short a time, or the immeasurable time of writing in Schefer's texts. Anamorphically engendered, the object floats between the registers of our theoretical presuppositions and undoes them. It is, after all, not a method.

PART 2

Society, Image, Social Difference: Between the Paris Commune, the Salon and the People



Cultural Movement and the Paris Commune

The present study originated in an investigation of the political prints produced in Paris during the period of the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune of 1871. These cartoons, caricatures, songsheets and posters have generally been used as illustrative material in historical works.¹ A number of lists and catalogues of them have been drawn up, and a substantial series of them published.² The centennial year of the Commune in 1971 was greeted with exhibitions in various museums and galleries – including the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Musée Municipal of St Denis, whose catalogues form an instructive contrast.³ However, with the exception of a few of the more famous caricatures of Courbet, this material remains largely unknown to any but historians and ‘amateurs’ of the Commune.⁴ No substantive attempt has been made to subject it to detailed thematic and historical analysis except in one or two brief articles.⁵ Professional historians of art and caricature see the prints simply as an unhappy deviation from some idealised tradition, and

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- 1 For example, Bourgin 1971; Brauhat, Dautry and Tersen 1970; Soria 1970–1. For an exhaustive list see *The Paris Commune, 1871, Inventory of the Collection in the University of Sussex Library, introduction by Eugene W. Schulkind*.
- 2 (i) Berleau 1890 is Maurice Quentin-Bauchart’s catalogue of his own collection which he left to the Musée Carnavalet; (ii) Maillard 1874 is a part of the anti-communard movement; (iii) Feld 1971; (iv) Ducatel 1973 is the most complete repertoire of illustrations, though representing only a fraction of those to be found in the De Vinck collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), the Musée Carnavalet and the Victoria and Albert Museum.
- 3 Jean Lacambre published an article ‘Les expositions a l’occasion de centenaire de la Commune de Paris’ (Lacambre 1972). The catalogue of the v&A exhibition, *The Franco-Prussian War and the Commune in Caricature*, makes no sense of the prints. In one instance a red sun which is clearly rising, and so terrifying Thiers and Favre, is said to be setting. The St Denies catalogue *La Commune de Paris* contains an essay by Michel Troche, ‘Caricaturistes Maudits’, which, in ten pages, presents the best single view of the subject.
- 4 See the journal *La Commune*, published by the Association des Amis de la Commune de Paris, which contains much useful work.
- 5 The works of Bourgin, Terrier and Feld are very thin in relation to their size, and lack an analytical method in dealing with the prints. Michel Troche’s article improves on them, but covers little ground.

sincere defenders of the Commune have felt obliged to apologise for their supposed 'crudeness', amateurishness and virulence.⁶

The most appropriate formulation of an approach to the cultural problems of the Commune is to be found in a small number of articles on poetry and song, and it is to these one must turn for guidance when analysing the visual arts of the time.⁷ In so doing one is bound to turn away from the history of caricature as a sub-section of art history and instead embark on a precise periodisation and class analysis of the social movement that gave rise to it. This entails more than an understanding of topical and journalistic references, it implies an exposition of the actual social relation between the political print on the one hand, and other forms of cultural expression – song, poetry, etc. – on the other, as well as the relation of both to the fine arts, literature and theatre. Even though one is dealing with specifically cultural phenomena, it may well be the case that any aesthetic contacts between them remain largely peripheral. Here, what began as an attempt at a sort of catalogue raisonné of a group of political prints has, of necessity, become a study of the cultural condition of the Parisian working class, and of their relation to the other classes and strata that made cultural interventions in the Commune.

This essay, then, is a preliminary sketch for such a project,⁸ and deals essentially with three groups of material, which are illustrative of the conditions of cultural production under the Second Empire and explanatory of the forms of culture developed during the Commune itself. These three groups deal with the conditions of production in the performing arts, the fine arts and journalism,

6 Grand-Cartaret 1888. The sections on the Commune constitute a case of criminal negligence, born of political hatred.

7 Kaplow 1972, and Maurice Dommanget in his works on education, culture and childhood in the Commune, have both broken useful ground. But they tend to abstract the relation of artists to the working-class movement from a comprehensive historical setting. The articles I have found most useful are: (i) Schulkind 1951. This is a pioneering work whose shortcomings do not affect its overall validity; (ii) Reberieux 1971; (iii) Rancière 1978; and (iv) Borreil 1978. These last two, on café censorship and colportage respectively, appeared while I was working on the same group of dossiers in the Archives Nationales in Paris. I find myself generally in agreement with their main conclusions, but they do not present literature that was authorised as well as banned (see below). As a group, these four items constitute a serious approach to the subject, both in terms of materials and methodology, and they avoid a kind of hagiographic sentimentality that affects both Dommanget and Kaplow. Also see two articles by Robert Brécy in *La Commune*, No. 3 and No. 9–10.

8 My work has arisen entirely from teaching a course on the Paris Commune to final year history students at Portsmouth. The complete project is being done jointly with my colleague Roger Thomas, who has read and altered this text.

each seen in relation to the central cultural, political and economic preoccupations of the working class. The starting point is the period of the decline of the Second Republic, after the June Days of 1848; that is, the period of the consolidation of government power over the revolutionary forces which had brought it into being.

Just as the Third Republic, some twenty years later, was to establish itself on the carnage of the Commune through the perpetuation of the most repressive aspects of the government of Napoleon III, so the Second Republic had re-established some of the essential forms of surveillance and control that had been used to counter-revolutionary resistance to the July Monarchy. In so doing it initiated a pattern of government that was to unite a wide cross-section of social forces against the bourgeois state. The laws established by the bourgeoisie were developed and refined after Napoleon's *coup d'état*. They affected every section of society, and any person who openly opposed or appeared to oppose the government and the state. The laws which concern us here are those covering the censorship and sale of literature, and those affecting public entertainment in all its various forms. Harsh and comprehensive,⁹ their execution required a complex system of surveillance and repression. This was performed with a cynical self-consciousness by the upper echelons of state commissions and ministries, and with less cynical mindlessness by the police and police spies. At the same time that they protected the state, these laws bore a definite relation to certain aspects of economic development, exceptionally acting in contradiction to the economic interests of the dominant classes. At the ideological level they not only permitted the suppression of dissent, but enabled the Empire to attempt to fill up the vacuum so created with a culture favourable to itself.

The laws governing the distribution of literature were enacted on 27 July 1849 and 17 February 1852. These obliged *colporteurs* to seek prefectoral permission to exercise their trade, and limited the literature permitted for colportage to items receiving an official stamp.¹⁰ A commission was established to examine the works submitted for the right of colportage. The *secrétaire adjoint* of this commission, Charles Nisard, made its character quite clear in the introduction to his famous book on the history of colportage.

C'est alors qu'en voyant s'accumuler, pour ainsi dire, sous ma main, tant de matériaux précieux pour l'histoire littéraire, je n'eus pas de peine à comprendre le parti qu'on en pourrait tirer. J'estimai ensuite que si,

9 See the relevant volumes of Griotet, 1920–6, or other standard works on French law.

10 Stamp duty on printed matter provided a bottomless source of revenue to the government (Nisard 1854). Cf. the control of the Chartist Press in Britain.

dans l'intérêt des personnes faciles à séduire, comme le sont les ouvriers et les habitants des campagnes, la commission ne devait pas manquer d'interdire le colportage aux trois quarts de ces livres, cette prohibition ne regardait pas les gens à l'épreuve des mauvaises lectures, c'est-à-dire, les érudits, les bibliophiles, les collectionneurs et même les simples curieux de littérature excentrique. J'ai donc cru faire une chose qui serait agréable aux uns et aux autres, en rassemblant tous ces livrets sous un seul point de vue, et en les sauvant en masse du naufrage où ils allaient périr isolément.

[Thus it was that, as I saw an accumulation, so as to speak under my hand, of so many precious materials for the history of literature, I had no trouble in understanding what one could make of them. I then judged that if it is the interest of those easily misled, as are the workers and country folk, then the commission should not fail to forbid the sale of three quarters of these books, but that such a prohibition does not concern people impervious to improper reading – that is to say, men of learning, bibliophiles, collectors and even those who are simply curious about eccentric writing. So, then, I believed it would be agreeable to this whole group of readers to bring together all of these booklets under a single point of view, at the same time saving them en masse from the shipwreck where they would perish alone.]

In a period which had seen both the rise of realism and the ethnographical study of a rural and urban popular culture in a stage of major transformation,¹¹ the bourgeoisie were as conscious of the dangers of a potentially autonomous cultural movement of the masses as they were of its picturesque charms. The amalgam of traditional rural and urban cultural forms with the newly developing social demands of a people subjected to conditions of capitalism in both town and country had proved a disquieting and disruptive force under the July monarchy.¹² The most organised aspects of this culture, such as the *goguettes* in Paris, were clearly capable of operating as effective vehicles of political protest and secret organisation.¹³ Indeed in the 1840s collections of

11 See Meyer Schapiro's classic article (Schapiro 1941) and Sloane 1951.

12 The question of a new urban culture is richly illustrated in George Duveau's two important works: Duveau 1946, and 1948. However, new work on popular culture can be found in the writings of Maurice Agulhon, for example, Agulhon 1970, and 1975. See also the article by Robert J. Bezucha in Price (ed.) 1975.

13 Brochon 1956, and 1957. The introduction to the former gives a useful account of the *goguettes* and their secret ceremonies.

popular songs were printed that both admitted the essentially working-class composition of the *goguettes* while attempting to absorb them into the market for luxuriously illustrated books. It is significant that Pierre Dupont could be threatened with deportation for his more militant songs, the 'Chant du Pain' and the 'Chant des Paysans', while later, after he had backed down, he was sanctified by the bourgeois market in the four-volume edition of his works introduced by Baudelaire.¹⁴ The Revolution of February 1848 and the June Days taught the need for the conscious control which Nisard so clearly expresses.

Such clarity of intention is useful in discussing the more complex case of the performing arts and the censorship of cafés-concerts and theatres. This had been established by the laws of 17 November 1849 and 29 December 1851. While the objectives were similar to those controlling literature, their implementation was obviously complicated by the nature of performance. Every time a play was shown in a theatre, the text had to be examined and authorised by a special commission.¹⁵ Permission to build a theatre and to manage one also had to be granted by the government. The programmes of cafés-concerts were the object of rigorous restriction, of which the purpose was both to exclude any political or 'immoral' tendencies, and to prevent undue competition between the cafés and the more traditional forms of theatre.¹⁶ This inspection of programmes and performances, carried out on a daily basis, aimed at the total exclusion of spontaneity or active participation on the part of the essentially popular audiences of some of the cafés. The performance itself, as compared with the *goguettes* of the 30s and 40s, developed towards entertainment by

14 Baudelaire's famous denunciation of art for art's sake in his introduction to Dupont conceals a de-politicisation of Dupont's poetry. It is the theme of humanitarianism and universal love that Baudelaire extols, at the expense of political militancy. See Dupont 1855–9. An interesting example of an earlier attempt to sell the *goguettes* to the bourgeoisie is Daumier 1845. It is illustrated by Daumier and others. The role of the best known of the singing clubs, Le Caveau, is worth examining under the Empire. It provided an official popular art.

15 In the main, the following information is taken from the series F18 and F21 in the Archives Nationales, Paris (A.N.).

16 The prevention of competition with traditional theatre and opera was an aspect of the original legislation governing the cafés-concerts. They were forbidden to mix verse and prose, have more than two persons on stage, use travesty, etc. Theatre owners were constantly worried by infringements of the law and complained to the police (see A.N. F21, 1338, which contains an administrative circular on the application of the decree of January 1864 freeing the theatrical industry. F21, 1041 contains a report of the 1870s on the decline of the theatre, which is attributed to vulgarisation of public taste by the cafés on the one hand, and the limits imposed by censorship on the other.)

professionals and away from audience participation and collective singing. A parallel was thus established between the different types of entertainment within the capital.¹⁷ A form of control was elaborated that favoured an imperial 'popular' culture.

It should here be noted that the surveillance exercised over the performing arts did, at times, run counter to the interests of the speculative theatre and café owners who hoped to enrich themselves from the provision of entertainment in Haussmann's Paris.¹⁸ The government responded to the growing dissatisfaction of the theatre owners with the decree of 6 January 1864 relieving the restrictions on building and managing theatres. Censorship, however, remained in full force. The cafés-concerts had their tax burdens lightened but were still forbidden to present shows which would compete with the traditional theatre – unless, that is, a café mounted a cantata in praise of the Empire.

Moreover, censorship imposed a certain monotony, in as much as writers aimed as much to please the censor as they did their public, and sought easy stereotypes. The use of selective subsidies by the imperial government in itself imposed financial restrictions on an industry that the decree claimed to have freed.¹⁹ Such contradictions between the interests of the Bonapartist state and the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie whom it had rescued from 1848 are important contributory factors in the formation of the class alliances opposed to the Empire after 1868, and also play a role in the cultural policies of the Commune itself.

The cultural policies of the government will be illustrated here by three examples of censorship. The first dates from the period of the Second Republic,

17 Under the surveillance of Débits de Boissons in the Archives of the Police Prefecture of Paris, there is an interesting ministerial circular of February 1865. It makes it quite clear that the function of the laws is to maintain the cafés as places of entertainment and to prevent them becoming clandestine clubs or places of propaganda.

18 For a detailed discussion of the economic and political contradictions of Haussmann's urbanism, see Gaillard 1977, Chapter 1, e.g., pp. 50 ff. It seems to me that the question of 'l'industrie théâtrale' is a related one. In her chapter on the Grands Magasins Jeanne Gaillard draws attention to the shift from the more private shopping of the Restoration and July monarchy to the more public consumption of the Empire. This also offers parallels with entertainment.

19 A.N. F21, 1338. 'Circulaire sur la liberté des theatres', mentioned above. 'Pour le moment, Monsieur le Prefet, vos efforts doivnt tendre à ce que les subventions existantes ne soient pas retirées et à ce qu'il en soit plutot accordé de nouvelles, à la veille d'une épreuve qui veut être fait avec loyauté, mais avec prudence. Ainsi, le mouvement des lettres et des arts sera a la fois developpé par la concurrence et soutenu par des liberalités utiles' (28 April 1864, Ministère de la Maison de l'Empereur et des Beaux Arts).

and regards a play called 'La Jambe Morte, ou Les ouvriers de Paris', submitted to the *Commission d'Examen* for performance at the Théâtre de Belleville.²⁰ The play is about the corruption of a worker by the prospect of wealth, his repentance, and the meting out of moral justice. The notes of the Commission read: '... l'auteur a cherché à mettre en saillie les devoirs mutuels de la classe opulente et la classe ouvrière, en montrant à la fois, que si la richesse oblige, il est souvent funeste à l'ouvrier de se laisser emporter hors de sa sphère par d'ambitieuses illusions, et de chercher ailleurs que dans le travail et la bonne conduite, la tranquillité et le bonheur' [the author seeks to put in high relief the mutual duties of the opulent class and the working class, showing in turn, that if wealth requires it, it is often disastrous to the worker to let himself be carried out of his sphere by ambitious illusions, and to seek elsewhere than in work and the good road, tranquility and happiness]. A useful drama, the notes point out, to present in a popular theatre. But, there is a verse which reads, with underlining by the censors:

Mais la vieillesse avance!
l'travail manq'ra demain.
 O vous! qui de la France
dirigez le destin
sur vos nombreux subsides
prenant quelques deniers
fondez des invalides
 des pauvres ouvriers!
 Pour qu' ils n' manq' pas d' courage
 le repos après l' ouvrage
 v' la c' que demand' mes amis
 les ouvriers de Paris.

[But old age advances! / there will be no work tomorrow. / O you! Who lead the destiny / of France / on your numerous subsidies / taking some pennies / you found the hospices for / the poor workers! / For they do not lack courage / the rest after the work / that is what my friends ask for, / the workers of Paris.]

(The ignorant orthography is explained by the title of the song, 'la Ronde des Ouvriers'.)

20 A.N. F21, 995.

The principal problem, in the view of the Commission, is not just the discussion of subsidies, but the posing of the workers' wishes under the form of 'une sorte de demande impérative' [a sort of imperative demand]. This fear of emphasis becomes a recurrent theme of censorship, even when it is more or less at ease with the content of a play or café song. This particular piece was to be presented just over two years after the closure of the National Workshops and the failure of the reformist pretensions of the bourgeoisie. The demands of the song, however harmless the context, might easily awaken memories, and revive the consciousness that the government was not a friend of the people. Under the Empire, as the class antagonisms developed and the opposition organised, the state was at ever greater pains to present itself as the people's benefactor, seeking to avoid even the slightest, most obscure, allegorical hint that it was not all it pretended to be. Especially in theatre or café, performances where the audiences were quite socially mixed, the wrong word with the wrong emphasis might readily awaken a dangerous response.²¹ In the case of 'La Jambe Morte', the censors agreed to the following modification to the offending verse:

Quand la vieillesse avance,
les besoins sont pressants
mais aujourd'hui la France
veille sur ses enfants.

Les progrès sont rapides,
 et l'avenir meilleur
 créera les invalids
 pour le bon travailleur,
 espérance et courage,
 Le repos après l'ouvrage
 v'la ce q'auront mes amis
 Les ouvriers de Paris.

[When old age advances / needs are pressing / but today France / watches
 over her children. / Progress is rapid / and a better future / will create the

21 Both M. Rebéreioux and J. Rancière (see note 7 above) have illustrated this point. T.J. Clark, in Clark 1977, has also drawn attention to a fear among the authorities that the cafés could spill over into violence. Political protest could be slipped into other forms of entertainment. For instance the composer Litolff twice worked the 'Marseillaise' into respectable musical medleys: see Lasalle 1872, p. 8. On the second of these occasions, in 1862, it appeared in a mixture of national anthems by Verdi!

crippled / for the good worker, / hope and courage, / the rest after work /
that is what my friends will have / the workers of Paris.]

It is this detailed concern with the possible effects of any given performance that links the attitudes of the censors towards the traditional theatre on the one hand, and more popular forms of entertainment on the other. 'La Jambe Morte' (which is actually the name of a château) raises another question, which will only be mentioned here. This is the presentation of the workers, both as individuals and as a class, in the theatre, and of their attitude to this presentation. Both in the influential plays of the left, *Le Chiffonnier de Paris* of Felix Pyat, or in the mass-produced works of D'Ennery and Grangé, this is a significant issue, but one which we must leave aside to concentrate on censorship.

The second example is a theme rather than a single play, the theme of the representation of the First Empire and Napoleon Bonaparte.²² The handling of plays about the first Napoleon is limited by a number of factors, of which the two principal embarrassments are the emergence of his Empire from the Great Revolution, and its eventual destruction. On 2 September 1861, the 'bureau des théâtres' [office for theatres] recommended that a play by Victor Séjour, entitled *l'Invasion*, and destined for the Théâtre de la Porte Saint Martin, be refused a visa. The 'invasion' was that which overthrew Napoleon I, and the commission wrote: 'Malgré la revanche éclatante que la France a prise, malgré la place glorieuse que l'empereur Napoleon III lui a reconquise parmi les nations nous pensons que, sous la dynastie napoléonienne, le spectacle profondément affligeant et humiliant des calamités que l'esprit de parti a reprochées au premier Empire et présentées comme la cause de sa chute, ne peut être mis devant les yeux du public' [Despite the brilliant revenge that France has taken, despite the glorious place that Emperor Napoleon III had reconquered for himself amongst the nations we think that, under the Napoleonic dynasty, the profoundly afflicting and humiliating spectacle of the calamities of which party spirit has accused the first Empire, and presented as the cause of its downfall, cannot be put in front of the eyes of the public].²³ The linking of current political preoccupations, here the fear of 'l'esprit de parti', with historical events is typical.

More complex was a case of 27 November the same year, in which a play *Napoléon* by Dumas père, first performed in 1850, was also refused authorisation. The *Commission d'Examen* of 13 December admitted that the piece had

22 The following examples are taken from Goncourt 1892. Its transcriptions appear to be accurate.

23 Goncourt 1892.

been written to glorify the Empire at the time of the downfall of the restoration monarchy: 'Nonobstant, la reprise de cette pièce, surtout sur un théâtre populaire, présente aujourd'hui plusieurs questions d'une haute gravité. Les principaux inconvénients qui nous frappent sont, au commencement, la mise en scène de l'époque républicaine avec cris de: vive la republique, et la Marseillaise; ensuite, à côté des splendeurs du premier empire, les désastres de la France, question tranchée naguère par la décision qui a interdit le drame l'invasion' [Nonetheless, the return of this play, especially in a popular theatre, presents today several questions of high gravity. The main disadvantages that strike us are, first of all, the stage of the Republican era with cries of: Long live the Republic! And the Marseillaise; then, beside the glories of the first Empire, the disasters of France, a question formerly decided by the decision which forbade the drama of invasion]. Pausing on some minor issues of the presentation of the Imperial nobility, and the possible aggravation of relations with Britain that might arise from showing the 'martyr de Sainte-Hélène', the Commission concluded:

Au point de vue de la paix intérieure, de la nécessité de la conciliation des partis, dont il importe de ouvrir l'antagonisme du voile de l'oubli; au point de vue des relations internationales avec un pays allié, contre lequel il est peut-être inopportun de rappeler nos griefs, nous pensons que la reprise de la pièce de Napoléon Bonaparte offre des difficultés, d'un order trop élevé et nous paraît présenter trop d'inconvénients pour que nous puissions en proposer l'autorisation.

[From the point of view of civil peace, of the necessity of reconciling the parties, including the importance of reopening antagonism from under the veil of forgetfulness; from the point of view of international relations with an allied country, against which it is perhaps inopportune to remind her of our griefs, we think that the revival of the play of Napoleon Bonaparte offers difficulties, of too high an order and it seems to us to present too many inconveniences for us to be able to propose its authorisation.]

At the core of this refusal lies the desire that culture should not remind people of political history, nor show the existence of different views within society. In particular, the Second Empire has no beginning and no end, it is a government of popular consent, and (in a further example), is not to be overshadowed by its glorious predecessor.²⁴ For all sectors of society, social and political gratitude

24 Ibid., p. 253. 'Bonaparte où les premières pages d'une grande histoire'. For the basis of the

is an appropriate and admissible mode of feeling, closely linked with moral propriety. Moral propriety itself is seen as a force for cohesion and passivity, and the denial of the very existence of immorality served to protect the ruling class from many an accusation.

Before discussing the role of the censorship in more mass or 'popular' structures, a brief connection can be made with the fine arts. While every type of printed matter was subject to censorship, painting and sculpture enjoyed a more privileged position. A painter or sculptor did not have to establish any copyright through the system of the 'dépôt légal', but was automatically assured full ownership of his or her work. It might be difficult for an artist to get a political or 'immoral' work into the salon, and, in an exceptional case, such as Manet's 'Execution of Emperor Maximilian', he might be forced to withdraw the lithograph from circulation. However, the principal problem thus imposed upon him was one of access to the market, not one of the absolute loss of control over the distribution of his work.²⁵ That Manet's *Olympia* was abused when it was shown at the Salon of 1865 did not result in its prosecution for immorality, nor in the end of his career. An artist's relative immunity from censorship was enjoyed neither by the printmaker nor the performer. In 1862 the scandalous café singer Rigolboche was removed from public view by the pressure of the censors on cafés and theatre directors.²⁶

When Ernest Pichio painted his work *La Mort d'Alphonse Baudin sur la Barricade du Faubourg St Antoine December 1851*, shown at the Salon of 1869, he breached the barrier between fine art and *rapportage* in a way that more allegorical work could not.²⁷ The 'Affaire Baudin' of 3 November 1868 had marked a major crisis in the decline of the Imperial government. A wide cross section of Republicans had gathered at the tomb of Baudin in the Cimetière Montmartre, and, in a celebration that was both political and cultural, made him a hero and rallying point for republican sentiment.²⁸ The young worker-artist Gailard fils extemporised some couplets over the unknown tomb, including these lines:

idea of the Second Empire as a popular government, see Louis Napoléon's book, *Les Idées Napoléoniennes* (Napoleon 1860).

25 The argument needs to be developed with a more thorough analysis of legal sources and specific cases of legal and political censorship. The privileged position of artists dates to the copyright laws of 1793 (see Griotet 1920–6).

26 *Censure sous Napoleon III*, p. 166.

27 All the information on Pichiot is taken from *Museux* 1893.

28 Zévaès 1935.

Vingt ans, vingt ans d'oubli, de Douleur, de silence,
 Ont passé sur la pierre ou ton nom seul est mis ...
 Mais le règne insolent d'un pouvoir tyrannique
 Jusqu'à la fin des temps, non, ne saurait durer!²⁹

[Twenty years, twenty years of forgetting, of pain, of silence,
 Have passed on the rock where only your name is placed ...
 But the insolent reign of a tyrannical power
 will not last, no, till the end of time!]

The demonstration of 1868, and the painting shown one year later, served to undo that forgetfulness which the government had tried to impose, that 'voile d'oubli' [veil of forgetfulness]. Unlike Manet, Pichio was able to show his work because the government felt obliged to placate the opposition movement. The trials that had followed on the original demonstration acted only as a further provocation, and, in the words of a ministerial report, 'En présence de cette situation complexe le gouvernement devait se garder également d'un excès d'indulgence comme d'un excès de rigueur' [In this complicated situation the government should restrain itself equally from an excess of indulgence as well as an excess of strictness].³⁰

If, however, almost the entire political and literary spectrum of republicanism heaped their praises on Pichio and addressed their verses to him, the reactionary press was as unhappy as the government to see such memories revived. In 1872, at the official inauguration of a tomb for Baudin, *Le Figaro*

29 From the transcript of the trial, 'Affaire de la Souscription Baudin, seul compte rendu complet, recueilli par la sténographie et revu par les défenseurs' (1868). The trial not only involved charges relating to the demonstration, but also the opening of a subscription to Baudin, which was squeezed into the legal category of a 'mouvement intérieure'.

Gambetta made his name defending Delecluze Biographies of Gaillard *fils*, and his more famous father, Gaillard *père*, can be found in Jean Maitron, *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français*. However, the entries are inaccurate, and I have reconstructed the activities of Gaillard *père* and *fils* from the Police and War archives, as well as other sources and memoirs. Gaillard *fils*' literary and visual work will be the subject of a single study.

30 A.N. BB18, 1780, item 9565 a 4. Report on the Affaire Baudin. Even the Legitimists sided with the Empire, along with the Orleanists. Both offered money to the subscription ... 'ce rapprochement et ce concours d'hommes appartenant notoirement à des opinions politiques opposées à celles pour qui Baudin est mort prouve qu'il ne s'agissait pas seulement d'une mémoire ... à honorer mais d'un but politique à poursuivre: c'est la coalition. Or le but commun de toutes les coalitions est le renversement de ce qui est'.

called on Pichio to forget, and to let sleeping ghosts lie: 'Aujourd'hui, pour ne pas perdre votre temps et vos couleurs, il faut chercher d'autres sujets. La barricade a cessé d'être à la mode' [Today, so as not to waste your time and your colours, it is necessary to seek other subjects. The barricade has ceased to be fashionable].³¹ The article mockingly called for painters to celebrate the Commune, a challenge which Pichio met with his *Le Triomphe de l'Ordre* in 1875. The Third Republic, freshly established on the slaughter of the Commune, proved less flexible than the Empire in collapse. Pichio's canvas did not get as far as the Salon Jury, but was returned by the *Directeur des Beaux Arts*, de Chennevières, who wrote: 'Vous avez présenté à l'Exposition un tableau dont le sujet retrace un épisode de notre dernière guerre civile ... Des souvenirs aussi douloureux ne sauraient être évoqués dans un concours national; ils sont, en effet, de nature à émouvoir des passions politiques auxquelles l'art doit rester étranger ...' [You have presented to the Exposition a painting in which the subject retraces an episode of our last civil war ... These painful memories should not be evoked in a national competition; they are, in effect, of a nature to bring up political passions from which art must remain removed ...].³² The painting could not be shown, and its reproduction was forbidden, effectively denying the artist either financial benefit or political effect.³³ Among the abuses heaped upon Pichio was one that became quite current in this period, the equation of political commitment with lack of talent.

In one way or another forgetfulness, especially of classes and class conflict, is a common theme of bourgeois culture, a theme which can be related to the concept of art as a transcendent form of activity. What we have tried to indicate here is a relation between this theme and the interests of a particular ruling class, seen through its operation in specific institutions. By returning to song, we can examine the same problem in another context.

It is important not to sentimentalise the *goguettes* of the Restoration as a form of 'pure' working-class culture.³⁴ The connection of even their most outstanding singers with the middle class is clear. At the same time, we must recognise that the Empire went to some length to break any elements of continuity with the militant culture of the preceding period. Throughout the '50s the lists of proscribed songs, which were regularly drawn up and revised,³⁵ were full of titles that refer to previous revolutionary struggles as well as the more political

31 Museux 1893.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 See Rancière 1978.

35 A.N. F21, 996, 1040, F18, 1680-1.

songs of well-known writers. 'Le Chiffonnier', 'Camille Desmoulins', 'Charlotte Corday', 'La Fille du Transporté', 'Propriété c'est le Vol', 'Les Paysans', 'Le Roi s'Amuse' (Hugo was in exile, of course), 'Riche et Pauvre', are typical titles from lists of c. 1854. Authors include Béranger himself, as well as Hésesippe Moreau and Dupont. Alongside the political and social songs, however, are a large number of bawdy or obscene ones. Some of these are from the pens of authors more famous for their political work, but who, none the less, sought to make themselves a living in the commercial market. For instance 'Le Bijou de Voisine' by J.B. Clement was banned in 1866, at a time when a number of his less doubtful songs were widely sung, and when he was prosecuted for his political songs.³⁶ Up until the temporary ending of censorship on 4 September 1870, the majority of rejected songs were bawdy. After censorship was reestablished, these cease to be a majority, and political or social themes come to dominate. This suggests that the rejection of Imperial culture by the Communards was a profound one.

Other songs which met with suppression dealt, often flippantly, with the corruption of young peasant girls come to town, a concrete and urgent problem of the urban poor. In Pottier's work this subject, as well as the corruption of the proletarian family by bourgeois society, is seriously treated. A number of songs deal with high rents and property speculation, one, 'La Propriétaire', being rejected twice in 1868–9.³⁷ This again became a significant motif in the social policy and culture of the Commune, due to the crushing acceleration of rentals which resulted from Haussman's urban redevelopment.

As with the traditional theatre, the control of performance, with all its random elements, led the censors to seek safety through excess. In 1867 a naive enough ditty called 'Le Bonnet' was refused. 'Don't lose your bonnet' could be a call to remember 'Marianne'. Any humanist or pacifist themes could imply shortcomings on the part of the Empire – why should people demand improvement in the country of Napoleonic socialism? An ironic song of 1866, which actually gave the last word to the authorities, was condemned for its political verse. 'Jean qui rit et Jean qui Pleure' [Jean who laughs and Jean who cries], the latter sings,

36 See Daumal 1937. See also Maitron, *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français*. Also cf. the song-writer Eugene Chatelain, in Maitron, *Dictionnaire biographique*. Clement spent one year in St. Pelagie.

37 A.N. F18, 1680. The same dossier contains 'Chacun vit de son metier', a song of Pottier's normally attributed to 1883 rather than 1869. See Pottier 1966. The song 'Jean Misère', given as 1880, contains the lines 'Malheur! ils nous font la leçon,/ Ils prechent l'ordre et la famille;/ Leur guerre a tue mon garçon,/ Leur luxe a debauché ma fille!'

Oh ne pouvoir rien dire
 Et n'oser rien écrire,
 Est-ce bien amusant?
 Dieu, quel gouvernement!
 Notre liberté sainte
 Périt sous son étreinte ...
 Toi qui ris chaque jour
 Allons, pleure à ton tour.

[Oh not to be able to say anything / or dare write anything / Is that fun? / God, what a government! / Our sacred liberty / perished under his embrace ... / You who laugh each day / Come then, cry in your turn.]

Jean qui Rit's refutation of this could not mollify the censor.

Songs authorised in the same period include 'Le Pacificateur', where a 'Choir', 'Opinion', 'Europe', and 'Artisan' and the city of Amiens sing in praise of their Emperor. The cantata 'La Paix, la Gloire et l'Industrie' provides a similar outlet, while 'Une Soeur de Charité' also permits an 'ouvrier' to grovel to his Prince.³⁸ It was specifically for this type of performance that the *cafés-concerts*, such as the Eldorado and the Alcazar, were allowed to bend the rules limiting the number of singers, costumes and scenery that they could use on stage. Their content is worth a detailed analysis, but the more immediate concern here is with another aspect of the *cafés-concerts*, which typifies their development: that is, the star performer, in particular, the famed Thérèse. Her songbook,³⁹ published in several editions in the mid-sixties, contained a variety of light and bawdy songs that hopefully for the authorities were the real stuff of Imperial 'popular' culture. Above all she was celebrated for 'Le pied qui r'mue' and 'Rien n'est sacré pour un Sapeur'.

Thérèse Valadon was the product of a speculative and potentially lucrative form of urban entertainment and her success provided an impetus to its further development. In the cretinised atmosphere that the state sought to impose in the *cafés-concerts*, a more vital and vulgar style of performance found a ready market, and when Arsene Goubert, the director of the Alcazar, put Thérèse before that market, he and she both made a fortune, setting a new pattern of competition and emulation. Goubert took part in the movement to form an

38 A.N. F21, 1040.

39 *Thérèse et ses Chansons, orné d'un joli portrait*, edited by L. Bailly and Arsene Goubert, on the press of the Alcazar Lyrique (no date).

Association of Café Artists during the Commune doubtless to protect his business interests, as he was not prosecuted afterwards.⁴⁰ His cafés were closed on a number of occasions in punishment for infractions of the regulations,⁴¹ mainly on issues of obscenity and presentation. If he, along with other directors of cafés-concerts, regularly submitted programmes for authorisation that contained songs with political or social themes, it must have been in response to a demand amongst the audiences.

Various writers have drawn attention to the composition of the clientele at a number of the cafés-concerts, to the fact that it included the main strata of the bourgeois and working classes.⁴² Henri Gardejann, a contributor to the Thérèse industry that sprung up, wrote the following lines in his poem 'La Thérésiade: poeme en cinq chants, et en vers du huit partes' (a reference to one of her songs, 'A bas les partes'):⁴³

Le soir de ce jour mémorable
 Il se trouva, bien par hasard,
 Dans la salle de l'Alcazar
 Plus de monde que de coutume:
 Des employes, des gens de plume,
 Des étrangers de tous pays,
 Des grandes dames, des lais,
 Des ouvriers, des militaires,
 Des Princes, des apothicaires,
 Des étudiants, des avocats
 Des médecins, des auvergnats,

[The evening of that memorable day / he found himself, by chance, / in the Alcazar room / more people than usual: / employees, men of the pen, / foreigners from all countries, / great women, laypeople, / workers, soldiers, / princes, pharmacists / students, lawyers / doctors, men from Auvergne, and a crowd of passers by.]

40 Goubert's position is obscure. Owner of the Alcazar, he is listed as a member of the artists association. See the *Journal Officiel de la Commune*, 20 May 1871.

41 A.N. F21, 1338. For instance on 23 November 1866 the Prefect suggested five days' closure of the Alcazar as an exemplary measure against obscenity. This was a normal procedure.

42 This point is made by Clark 1977, but differently interpreted.

43 H. Gardejann, title as given, published Clermont-Ferrand, 1868.

An exaggeration perhaps, but a description of a public with a popular element which might, or might not, predominate, depending upon the type and location of the café. Working people, especially the men, frequented the cafés to drink there.⁴⁴ But they did so as members of a public rather than as members of a class. The *Mémoires de Thérésa* published in 1865 show an awareness of this. In front of the title page is written 'je dedie ce livre à celui qui je dois tout – au public!' [I dedicate this book to those to whom I owe everything – the public!]⁴⁵

These 'Mémoires', which it appears, were ghosted by two journalists – MM. Wolff and Blum, are worth examining closely. But we can also trace Thérésa's career in a small book written by Henry Morel in 1868, entitled *Nouveaux Mémoires de Thérésa*, claiming to be authentic story.⁴⁶ It corresponds more closely to other sources than do the original *Mémoires*. Thérésa began her career in a demi-bohème of café singers and circus performers. In 1859 she sung for Mayer, then director of the Alcazar, for 100 francs per month. She performed romantic songs without much success. The Alcazar was not yet in vogue, and she returned to her Bohemian life. In 1862 Lorge took her on at the Eldorado for 200 francs a month, and in December the same year Goubert seduced her away to the Alcazar for 300 francs, provided she sang Comic Romances. If we look in the *Annales de la Propriété ...*,⁴⁷ we can see that this was the beginning of a career of financial infidelity and broken contracts for Thérésa, a career which both enriched her and, as a byproduct, enriched the French law on the question of performers' contractual responsibilities.

So, according to Morel, she did the 'Fleur des Alpes' with 'L'intonation et des gestes canailles qui ont popularisé le nom de notre héroïne' [the intonation and the rabble gestures that have popularised the name of our heroine]. By 1864 her salary was 2000 francs and it rose as her legal proceedings brought her fame and notoriety. That year Darcier wrote two songs for her, 'Le Chemin du Moulin', and 'Quand nos Hommes sont au Cabaret', which made her name. By 1865 her annual salary rose to 84,000 francs, and, according to Morel, 'Le premier mai 1865 ses appointements s'élèverent à soixante-douze mille francs' [On the first of May 1865 her salary rose to seventy-two thousand francs], excluding theatre work. In 1865–6 she performed her most famous songs, including the 'Sapeur',

44 Duveau 1946, Chapter 4, esp. Part 3, 'Les loisirs'.

45 There are seven editions of *the Mémoires de Thérésa, écrits par elle-meme* in the Bibliothèque Nationale (see e.g. Thérésa 1865).

46 Morel 1868. Morel was the author of one of the spate of savagely anti-communard books brought out to justify the massacres and deportations (Morel 1871).

47 *Annales de la Propriété Industrielle, Artistique et Littéraire*, 11, pp. 154, 254, and 499.

but not, as far as one can see, 'La Canaille', one of Darcier's most popular songs and a positive force in the culture of the Commune. During this period Rossini and Auber, the head of the Conservatoire, came to hear her, and Offenbach wanted to write an opéra-bouffe for her. The ghosted *Mémoires* sold 60,000 copies and made 18,000 francs for their authors. Details of her life were written up and performed in reviews, and, during the 1867 Exposition '... Les directeurs de théâtres déposaient à ses pieds des montagnes d'écus, pour l'engager ...' [The theatre directors placed at her feet mountains of crowns, to engage her].⁴⁸

In Marseilles a crowd of 10,000 rioted outside the concert-hall where she was to perform, protesting against the high prices of the places. Ten thousand or not, the story is significant. The singer wrote 'Tout en regrettant ces trop bruyantes manifestations, je dois vous avouer que, comme artiste, j'en suis très flattée ... cependant mon plus grand désir étant d'être entendue par le peuple, duquel je tiens tout ...' [While I regret these too noisy events, I must admit to you that, as an artist, I am very flattered ... however my greatest desire is to be heard by the people, to whom I owe all ...], and she hoped to arrange some popular concerts at the Alcazar of Marseille. Eminent bourgeois republicans, like Jules Claretie, hailed her,⁴⁹ and years later in 1883, Jules Vallès wrote: 'C'est Térésa, qui chanta "Malgré que nous soyons en carême Rien n'est sacré pour un sapeur!" jusque dans les salons de la Chaussée d'Antin et du Faubourg St Germain' [It's Theresa, who sang 'Despite Lenten time, Nothing is sacred for a sapper!' all the way to the salons of the Chausee d'Antin and to faubourg St Germain].⁵⁰ In short, Thérésa's reputation and fortune were, to a serious extent, made among bourgeois and petit bourgeois strata, on the basis of her mass popularity.

Certainly it emerges that famous singers and the directors of the cafés-concerts were able to make large sums out of the promotion and development of an already existing popular culture. But while Thérésa and Goubert grew fat, the writers to whom they owed their music did not. In the book of Thérésa's songs published by Goubert five are from the hands of Darcier and J.-B. Clément, who lived from hand to mouth throughout the Empire. Clément wrote later of the need to produce 'couplets sans importance' to finance his 'chansons du peuple' for which later he suffered imprisonment.⁵¹ But the collection and performance of songs was becoming an increasingly profitable business for specialised entrepreneurs and editors. Goubert engaged in prolonged legal

48 All details in Morel 1868.

49 Ibid.

50 Vallès 1971, p. 297.

51 Daumal 1937. Darcier was not a socialist like Clément. He was more a discontented déclassé.

action over 'Le Pied qui r' mue' which, to the anger of its editors, he adapted from the 'Chants et Chansons Populaires de France'. In 1864 a provincial editor, M. Vieillot, hounded and claimed damages against a family who had poached a copyright from him. He was the 'propriétaire de plus que quarante mille chansons, romances et morceaux d'opéra' [owner of more than forty thousand songs, romances, and pieces of opera].⁵² The political and social songwriters thus suffered the double problem of the expropriation of their saleable works by the entrepreneurs, directors and performers, and the suppression of their more serious work by the authorities. Under the Commune a number of them were able to take concrete measures to do away with these conditions.

Thérésa's *Mémoires* are a specific intervention in this situation. They present her relation to it in a way which both acknowledges her indebtedness, and depicts her as some kind of high point, a concentration of popular taste and aspirations. She refers to the two songs of Darcier that made her name, coyly admitting that Darcier 'taught me how to make people weep as well as laugh'.⁵³ From Houssot she drew 'la poésie gaie' and from Villebichot 'la musique joyeuse'. But it is she who is the people's artist, and she both flatters the people as well as counting upon their support for her authenticity. Quoting Louis Veuillot, she writes that Parisian speech is a 'langue à part' [separate language]. 'Tout Parisien est nait artiste' [All Parisians are born artists], she continues, but of all Parisians it is the worker who knows what she does. 'L'ouvrier en blouse, qui est perché là-haut, vous juge une pièce d'un trait, d'un mot ...' [The worker in overalls, who is perched up there, judges a piece with a gesture, a word ...].

J'attache un grand prix aux applaudissements du public en général, mais j'avoue que j'ai un faible pour la partie malheureuse de la population!

Est-ce parce que je suis fille du peuple et que j'ai été malheureuse comme eux?

Non! Mais il me semble que ceux-là méritent tout notre intérêt. De loin ils arrachent une soirée libre de leur vie de fatigue et de travail. Il faut les amuser à tout prix, car ils n'ont pas le moyen de revenir le lendemain.

Pour les classes aisées de la société, le café-concert n'est qu'un incident ... pour les autres notre estrade est un piedestal, et l'établissement où l'on chante prend les proportions d'un institution.

52 Both examples, *Annales de la Propriété*, for Vieillot, II, pp. 394 ff. Goubert's case was longer and more complicated still (II, pp. 179 ff.).

53 All quotations are from the first edition.

[I attach great importance to the applause of the public in general, but I admit that I have a weakness for the unfortunate part of the population!

Is it because I am the daughter of the people and I have been unhappy like them?

No! But it seems that those people deserve all our interest. Coming from far they wrench a free evening from their lives of fatigue and work. It is important to entertain them at all costs, because they do not have the means to return the next day.

For the upper classes of society, the café-concert is just one incident ... for others our stage is a pedestal, and the venue where singing happens takes on the proportions of an institution.]

Outside the café the workers line up to see her leave, to help her to her coach, they carry her across the mud: 'il pourrait arriver un malheur à leur artiste' [Something unfortunate could happen to their artist]. In short, the workers come to the café to drink, to see Thérésa and to forget. The remission from the fatigue of work is amusement.

It is no surprise, then, that there was a heated debate on café culture among the most politicised and educated sections of the working class and the socialist opposition. Thérésa and her kind did not just appear as a threat to an imaginary and idealised popular culture of long ago, but as a specific phenomenon of the cultural and economic development of the Empire, of a system which we have described as one of expropriation and suppression. If, as T.J. Clark has indicated,⁵⁴ 'Le Hanneton' showed Darcier stifling Thérésa, and La Rive Gauche condemned the craze for cafés, there was a concrete basis for such responses in economic and political life. They demonstrate much more than the 'inflexible reflexes of the Left'. 'Le Hanneton' consistently satirised the Thérésa mania that evolved around the *Mémoires*.⁵⁵ Its editor was Eugène Vermersch, whose contribution to Communard politics and culture was a major one.

Writing in 1877 Ferdinand Revillon said:⁵⁶

54 Clark 1977, p. 244. He uses the phrase 'inflexible reflexes of the left'.

55 E.g. 19 February 1865. Thérésa's *Mémoires* are just out, 'rien n'est sacre pour un auteur'. Despite Vermersch's importance, 'Le Hanneton' does not constitute the 'left', whatever might be meant by the use of such a word in such a context.

56 For Révillon, a pianist, see Maitron's *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français*. In exile in Switzerland he published *Chants révolutionnaires, patriotiques et sociaux français et épisodes politiques de 1770 à 1877*. It was printed on a communard press. The only copy I have found is in the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam.

Il est vrai de dire, sous le gouvernement du héros de Sedan, régnait en maître Offenbach, d'origine allemande, mais naturalisé français. Ce musicien marqua en France une époque de décadence et corruption. La débauche, l'oisiveté gouvernaient en haut comme en bas, dans les deux couches sociales ... Offenbach et Thérèse tenaient le sceptre, Napoléon complétait le trio. L'empire tomba, le peuple se releva; c'est alors que l'on vit Offenbach, ainsi que le fit son collègue Richard Wagner, maltraiter la France républicaine; ce fut là une lâcheté de la part des musiciens.

[It is true to say that, under the government of the heroes of Sedan, Offenbach reigned supreme, a German-born artist, but naturalised French. This musician marked an era of decadence and corruption in France. Debauchery, idleness governed in high places as well as low, in both social strata ... Offenbach and Theresa held the scepter, Napoleon completed the trio. The empire fell, the people rose again; it's then that we saw Offenbach, as did his colleague Richard Wagner, abuse the French republic; this was an act of cowardice on the part of the musicians.]

Indeed in her *Mémoires* Thérèse is depicted not only as loving the people, but as having boundless admiration for the 'heights' of bourgeois culture. At the same time she is depicted as the epitome of the artist as a free individual. As her political critics feared, she not only served to draw the attention of the people from more militant cultural forms, but was an active source of bourgeois artistic ideas.

'Il me semblait tout simple qu'on chantât comme on mangeait, pour obéir à la loi de la nature' [It seemed to me very simple that one sang as one ate, to obey the law of nature], is the opening theme of the *Mémoires*. Goubert, whose entrepreneurial abilities, nonetheless, are seen as crucial in her career, says to her: 'Laisse donc, il-y-a deux sortes de gens que l'on peut tutoyer sans les humilier, les domestiques et les artistes de talent' [So that's it, there are two sorts of people whom one address as 'tu' without humiliating them, domestics and artists of talent]; to which she replies: 'Je lui dis "vous"' [I say 'vous' to him]. Later, during her toing and froing between Goubert and Lorge, she challenges Goubert in these words:

Nous avons, nous autres, une nature à part. Dans les luttes que nous soutenons chaque jour avec le public nous avons besoin de courage; le vulgaire croit que c'est pour soustraire à notre vanité, mais ceux qui nous connaissent savent que c'est pour reprendre nos forces! ... vous m'avez traitée légèrement, je vous traite de même.

[We have, we others, a different nature. In the struggles that we support every day with the public we have need of courage; the vulgar person believes that it is in order to distract from our vanity, but those that we know, know that it is in order to strengthen our forces! ... you have treated me kindly, I will treat you likewise.]

Goubert's money, of course, draws her back.

With her 'natural' talent, she was able to learn to sing without instruction. 'Le véritable conservatoire, c'est le café-concert' [the true conservatoire is the café-concert], she writes. But still, she won't speak ill of the Conservatoire. On the contrary she lives on encouragement from great men. Auber comes to the Alcazar: 'Et bien, Monsieur Auber n'a pas dédaigné de venir entendre l'humble Thérèse' [Oh yes, Mr Auber did not disdain to come to listen to the humble Theresa]: she is humiliated to be so small in comparison to him. If people say to her 'you are nothing', she will reply, 'Peu m'importe, puisqu'un des plus grands musiciens de nos temps a daigné m'applaudir' [I don't care, since one of the greatest musicians of our times has deigned to applaud me]. At her first reception in a bourgeois salon she is overwhelmed with kindness and consideration. 'Mais l'artiste ne doit pas oublier le respect qu'elle doit aux personnages qui brillent au premier rang de la société, et dont les noms seraient déplacés dans les mémoires d'une chanteuse populaire' [But the artist must not forget the respect that she owes to the people that shine in the upper echelons of society, and whose names would be out of place in the memoirs of a popular singer]. It is with these sentiments, so essential to Imperial culture and the bourgeois conception of society, that the *Mémoires* are concluded.

We cannot argue that politically progressive opinion was united against Thérèse. Our earlier quotation from Jules Valles shows as much, though it has the character of a fond reminiscence. She actually played a role within a profound debate on the nature of popular and working-class culture, a debate which brought about a rapprochement between the radical intellectuals and the educated workers and working-class writers. Among the intellectuals, Francisco Salvador-Daniel,⁵⁷ who was to become the director of the Conservatoire under the Commune, presented her as the very essence of modern popular culture. In the second part of a projected history of popular culture he used

57 Salvador-Daniel was an expert on Arab music. He was killed in the last days of the commune and was horribly abused by the reactionaries in their reminiscences. The essay mentioned is entitled *Le Personnage Regnant – première lettre à Mlle. Thérèse de l'Alcazar* ... (Salvador-Daniel 1867). I hope to discuss this along with Révillon's, and other works on song and culture, in another study.

a method derived from Taine to show that she did indeed represent the spirit of the age. In a long and detailed argument he defeats the views of his 'imaginary' uncle, an old Jacobin, who will acknowledge the existence of little of artistic significance since the composition of the 'Marseillaise'. While Daniel's concern to show that there has been positive development since '93 places him firmly in the new generation of *révolutionnaires*, it is all too obvious from his argument that Thérésa's songs are much loved in the drawing-rooms of the provincial bourgeoisie. He himself appears to have written a number of popular songs, two of which can be found in the censor's files.⁵⁸ Given their innocence we can only presume that they were banned more because of his reputation as a radical than for their actual content.

This contradiction between a conception of culture on the one hand, and a highly advanced political and social involvement on the other, is normal in our period, and its development depends upon the particular effect of economic and social relations on the lives of individual artists or writers. It is present in Courbet, in the contradiction between his anarchist view of the creative ego and his desire to be a man of the people. In the case of Eugène Pottier, the coincidence of artistic and social practice is unusual. But it took many years for Pottier's poems to become known, operating as he did away from the confines and allures of the bourgeois market, seeking his outlets in a working-class movement whose growth and organisation was a long and painful process. The history of the 'Internationale' perfectly illustrates this point.⁵⁹ In the event the resolution of this contradiction was determined by much more than the perception and activity of individuals.

During the final phase of the Empire, 'l'Empire Libéral', the social, economic and cultural demands of the working class found an increasingly independent voice. The renewal of the right to hold public meetings during the election campaigns of 1868–9 was followed by a huge upsurge of popular debating clubs which used halls such as the Folies Belville and other places of entertainment. Clearly the dominant political questions of the day were repeatedly discussed, but so too were the themes of marriage, education, the role of women, family relations, God and religion.⁶⁰ The force of the discussion in these clubs was to differentiate the working class and its interests from the bourgeoisie, and to

58 A.N. F18, 1680. He became music critic of Rochefort's paper *La Marseillaise*.

59 For various histories of the Internationale, see for example the Sussex Catalogue and Zévaès 1936.

60 See Vitu 1869 and Louis-Albert 1869, the latter published by the 'orateurs' as an accurate account of their meetings. In it we find three lithographed versions of Gaillard *fil's* portraits charges from his own *Orateurs des Clubs*.

look for ways of imposing these interests on their rulers. In short, the process that unfolded in the political clubs was the opposite of that taking place in the cafés-concerts. Within the system of class alliances that overthrew the Empire, the working-class movement emerged as the main force, and in this context certain elements of an independent culture begin to appear. *Les Orateurs des Clubs*, a shortlived newspaper edited, illustrated and largely written by Gail-lard fils, borrows its form from the literary and political press. It comments on current 'orateurs' and their politics, using a traditional 'portrait-charge' as illustration, and also, in a series of articles entitled 'Bals et Réunions Publics', tries to distinguish their political activity from the degraded and commercial cultural life of the capital.⁶¹ At the same time criticisms and attacks on the Empire as a social system become more important in the work of radical cartoonists and journalists. After the fall of the Empire and its repressive apparatus this trend developed unrestricted.

The modifications of the laws controlling the press and public meetings during 1868 in no way meant that the Empire was prepared to tolerate socialist opposition. On the contrary, those who saw them as a signal to engage in more active opposition rapidly ended up in prison.⁶² The 'Affaire Baudin' is a good example of the way in which the Empire continued to fill up St Pelagie and impose massive fines. Temporarily, then, the Empire perpetuated the unity of the groupings aligned against it. But after 4 September 1870 the situation was definitively clarified. The republican government of 'National Defence' rapidly showed that it was going to follow the disaster of Napoleon's war with Germany with a 'peace' for which the working people would be made to pay. The class alliance disintegrated, and the struggle of the Parisian people against the dubious bourgeois republicans intensified. More and more 'La République Sociale' was seen to be the only guarantee of national and class salvation, that would link the resolution of the war and the betrayal of the republican government with the resolution of the social question.⁶³ The Paris Commune was the culmination of this movement, and its suppression was an event of unparalleled savagery. The themes and content of the political prints of the time were generated by the various aspects and contradictions of this process, in which cartoonists and journalists gravitated to positions in support of, or opposition to, the Commune. The form and technique of these prints too is

61 *Les Orateurs des Clubs* is to be found in the Bibliothèque Nationale. As far as I can see no one has as yet bothered to study it.

62 A very good account of this period can be found in Bellet 1967, Chapters 6 and 10.

63 Maurice Choury, in Choury 1960, gives a history of this development which is rich in implications for an analysis of the cartoons.

closely related to the nature of the class struggle. Once the attempts of the Empire to eliminate every trace of 'l'esprit de parti' had been shattered, the devious and tortuous forms of expression that they had enforced were likewise swept aside. The open intensity of class hatred could not be represented wholly through relying on old models, though many were taken up and transformed. New and extraordinary images and methods were found. The effect of the revolution on visual production was thus profound.

However, this constitutes another study. The response of caricaturists and journalists to the revolution can be seen as one aspect of the process whereby the political leadership of the Commune was formed. However, if the political print is a sensitive indicator of even the subtlest shades of political and social ideas and movements, it is not central to the process of cultural transformation initiated during the Commune. This transformation was based on the application of the principles of cooperation and association to all aspects of social and economic life, from the organisation of the workshop to the ideals governing family relations. Concomitant with this was the abolition of the constraints and anarchic demands of the bourgeois market. The overriding object was to assure the worker the value of his labour, control of his conditions of life, access to education etc., and had been formulated within the struggles of the working class under the Second Empire.⁶⁴ It was under the dominance of this ideology that the movements for federation and association in the arts were to take place.

The 'Fédération des Artistes', organised on 14 April and the 'Fédération des Auteurs et des Artistes des Théâtres et Concerts' organised on 16 and 18 April as well as the belated attempt to federalise the Conservatoire of 20 May were thus products of the particular needs of the artists involved, derived from the irresolvable problems that confronted them under the Empire. They were set up as parts of a much wider movement that was a fundamental movement of the working class. Insofar as their histories can be traced and their statutes studied,⁶⁵ their primary concern was with organisation, education and markets, and hardly at all with artistic questions, though they peripherally represented themselves as a potential source of artistic regeneration. The Artists Federation was also an organisation of skilled craftsmen-designers like Pottier.⁶⁶ The statutes display their own thinking as much as that of the 'fine'

64 See Moss 1976, Chapter 2, for a concise presentation of this issue; also Duveau 1946, and 1948.

65 A closer inspection of the *Journal Officiel de la Commune* in relation to the popular press is needed.

66 It is possible to argue as much a leading role for Pottier in the formulation of the statutes as for Courbet. Unfortunately his long preliminary report is lost. See Hippeau 1890.

artists, and demonstrate the existence of an objective basis in economic and social life for their rapprochement with the artists. If professional artists and craft workers drew apart after this period, this must be understood in relation to the rapid transformation and industrialisation of the working class as compared with the artist, who continued to be an individual producer. Inasmuch as the Federations were founded in reaction to a repressive state apparatus, they envisaged liberty for the arts as a total freedom from any kind of state subsidy, with no reference to their possible control by the Commune itself. Subsidy, which had been a means of promoting one artist above another, or one theatre above others, was understood as a form of enslavement, a means of restricting that 'freedom of the individual' that the bourgeoisie claimed to promote. Salvador-Daniel gave a powerful formulation to this view in a series of articles that he wrote on the eve of the Commune.⁶⁷ If the theatre entrepreneurs were horrified at the loss of subsidy, the artists looked to co-operation as a way forward, and the Café Eldorado was reorganised as an association.

The Artistic Federations were charged with the organisation of various concerts and cultural events, but the character of these was already determined by the development of the political movement. The months after the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war witnessed an upsurge of nationalist and patriotic culture in the cafés and theatres, which itself assumed a more social and popular character with the growing dominance of the working class. Songs in favour of the people, 'La Canaille', and songs against the Empire and the bourgeoisie, 'Le Sire de Fisch-Ton Kan', 'Paris pour un Beefsteak' – were widely sung, and the artists who most promoted them found favour with the people.⁶⁸ Thérèse sang the 'Marseillaise' during the war. Bordas sang 'La Canaille' during the Commune, while Darcier won credit for its composition. Looking back on the Commune, the police and censors of the Third Republic were determined to stamp out the singing of such songs and the use of the cafés-concerts for political meetings.⁶⁹ The re-establishment of the cafés as safe places took several more years to effect through surveillance, repression and political and cultural propaganda.

The authorities of the Third Republic also looked askance at the attempts of fine artists to organise themselves. The reform of the Académie in 1863, the extension of artists' copyrights carried out from 1861 to 1864, and the Salons

67 In *L'Homme*, subsequently *l'Homme Libre*, 10 March 1871, in four consecutive numbers.

68 See Lasalle 1872 and Labarthe 1910; also the *Journal Officiel*.

69 A.N. F21, 1338, 'Note sur les Cafés-concerts', November 1872. Also records of closures of cafés in the Préfecture de Police. Rancière 1978 has quoted tellingly from the 'Note ...' Also see Rebérioux 1971 and Parrain, 'Censure, Théâtre et La Commune', in the same collection.

des Refusés had all been efforts to persuade the artists to throw in their lot with the Imperial government, and not to associate it with the rigours of the bourgeois market.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, a number of them had gravitated towards socialism and sympathy for the working class, and thus participated in the Communards' attempt to abolish bourgeois social relations. The crushing of the Commune and all its innovations, the political harassment of Pichio and Courbet, together with more fundamental economic and social changes, all helped to undo this alliance. If the idea of a partisan, social art began to develop after the Commune,⁷¹ it was more in the thinking of some of the working-class artists than that of their more professional counterparts. Jules Dalou never gave up a social art, but it was men like J.B. Clement and Gaillard fils, as well as many of the exiles in New Caledonia, who produced something like a revolutionary cultural movement.

In conclusion, one needs to emphasise that this study is only a sketch. The final paragraphs have introduced new themes in a schematic way, and at many points documentation and evidence are missing. Some of this material is cited in the notes, but much remains to be analysed and brought to light. Political terminology has of necessity been rather crude; however, the class relations and state structures described here provide a solid basis for more detailed study and will help to clarify a general theory of popular culture under capitalism.

70 The report prepared for the prosecution of Jules Dalou and Jules Hereau, in the archives Historique de la Guerre, 3e Conseil, item 49, is an interesting summary of the government's fears of artists' self-organisation.

71 Schulkind 1951, Part Two, pp. 80–1.

The Sex of French Politics

Maurice Agulhon is an historian of rare significance. His major works, such as *Toulon* or *La République au village*,¹ make a profound and original contribution to our understanding of the structures of popular political life in the first half of the last century. His method, which might be roughly described as historical anthropology, has proved itself susceptible to the most fruitful developments and adaptations. It is a model for bringing together and analysing the most complex overlappings of different kinds and levels of historical evidence. A short essay on the problem of popular culture in 1848² is a concentrated epitome of Agulhon's mastery, and a preparatory sketch for the present volume has whetted our appetite for his excursion into the field of visual imagery. *Marianne into Battle* is, then, a history of the representation of Liberty and the Republic in France covering the century of revolutions that followed 1789.³ The evolution of the political image in all its political and social meanings is treated as an integral, if highly problematic, function of the historical process that leads from the crumbling of the absolute monarchy to the final, confident installation of a bourgeois republic. It is a history of various forms of visual representation, of symbols, emblems and allegories, processions, battles and performances, that are constituted within events and ideologies and, in a specific manner, are effective in their turn. Clearly such a history, a history of visual ideologies that are formed largely outside Salons and Museums, must be of immense importance to art historians. It occupies a significant position within the various developments of our discipline.

In his introduction to *Marianne*, Agulhon shows that he is fully aware of the complexities and difficulties of his task. The enormous body of material that makes up the history of political imagery has not even been touched by statistical analysis, or subjected to any kind of systematic study.⁴ It is, there-

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1 Agulhon 1980, and 1970.

2 Agulhon 1975. For work that is especially influenced by Agulhon see, for example, some of the American historians like R.J. Beuzucha and J. Merriman.

3 Agulhon 1981.

4 It is indeed a curious phenomenon that such an important subject as the political print should have been subjected to so little serious analysis. Work by experts such as Blum or

fore, his intention to follow the present rather general work with an exhaustive account of the entire political statuary of the Third French Republic: 'it is also our intention to single out the most public and therefore the most naturally political of the plastic arts, namely monumental sculpture'. *Marianne* is thus intended as a preliminary essay, a foundation and an exercise in method. It is as such that it must be assessed and any complete judgment must wait upon the publication of its sequel. He believes that his enterprise is justified by growing links between the disciplines of art history, sociology and anthropology.

Our methodological ambitions will appear neither totally original nor unique. It will soon be commonplace for historians to attempt to relate to a given subject knowledge hitherto accumulated by authors in quite distinct and strictly separate sub-disciplines. Political imagery may be considered a marginal subject, but perhaps it would be better to describe it as a frontier zone, a kind of 'no man's land'. It is neglected at the moment, but it could become an area claimed both by historians of minor or popularised forms of *art*, and by historians of secondary *political* instruments. This is the no man's land in which we, in our turn, intend to try to establish ourselves.⁵

If this is the dimension of Agulhon's ambition, then it is with caution that he insists that his general conclusions seem to be sustained by the limited quantity of his research for *Marianne*. So, it is not my intention in this review to criticise his overall objective, but to isolate some questions that arise from Agulhon's material and his way of looking at it. My aim is not to give a narrative run-down of the book, but to discuss some issues that are of interest for the history of art.

It is curious to note, in the passage that I have just quoted, a description of a possible historical method that looks very much like that of certain forms of art

Philippe-Jones is really shallow, while Fuchs is of mainly historiographical interest. On the great Revolution two outstanding works precede Agulhon's study. There is the volume by Renouvier published in 1863, which Agulhon lists in his bibliography, and there is a work published in 1912 in the USA – Henderson 1912. While this latter can only be called strangely Tory in approach, it is not without interest for some of Agulhon's own interpretation. Work on the Fêtes of the Revolution, from Dowd to Ozouf, is in the most immediate background to Agulhon, not any work of polemical imagery as such.

5 Agulhon 1981.

history, for instance the Marxist work of an Antal or a Clark, or the iconological analyses of a Panofsky or a Wind.⁶ More curious, then, that Agulhon, while adumbrating a method that could draw on such art histories, restricts himself to a method that must be described as basic iconography – that is, the reduction of imagery to simple political meanings, even if these meanings must be heavily qualified, and always seen as problematic and difficult to fix. That is to say, for Agulhon the lack of fixity of a meaning comes first and foremost from the technical difficulty of achieving precision, and not from an ambiguity that is inherent in the constitutive fabric of those images itself, in the ways in which they are produced and understood. To a certain extent this position of Agulhon's depends upon his view of the audience for political imagery. Rightly, he argues that this was the 'people', or 'simple' mentalities, to use one of his preferred epithets. One French government after another, revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, was necessarily constrained to attempt to win over the 'people' for its policies and actions, and one after another elaborated a programme of visual imagery as a part of this attempt. These systems of images, often complicated in their conception, fell prey to the simplified meanings forced upon them by popular levels of understanding. It is on the basis of this position that Agulhon can at one point take Boime to task for an over-complicated presentation of the imagery of the competition for the figure of the Republic of 1848.⁷ He thus offers a useful critique of aspects of art-historical method to the extent that they ignore the cultural level of popular audiences, but it is only to a very limited extent that we can really agree with him. We must insist that, as a principle of analysis, this approach is fraught with danger and is a source of many unnecessary and damaging closures in his book.

The following passage is cited from the conclusion to *Marianne*:

'The sex of a nation'. One can imagine how far up the garden path of socio-psychoanalytical meditation one could be led if one pursued that track. We must admit that we would put no great faith in such a venture, believing that to apply categories of individual psychology to collective concepts could lead one to make the mistake of taking metaphors for realities. To remain on the level of generally accepted facts, we simply point out that the nineteenth century was marked by an extreme inequality between the sexes, that women were much despised and that, in a period

6 See Antal 1948, and 1966; Clark 1973a, and 1973b; Panofsky 1939, and 1955; Wind 1968.

7 See Boime 1971a, as well as Boime 1971b. Agulhon's argument is in *Art Bulletin*, March 1971.

that we might today call 'phallocratic', the fact that the Republic was personified as Marianne was a considerable handicap for it.⁸

Well! It can just as well be argued that one of the 'generally accepted facts' of the way in which cultural images produce their meaning is precisely through the 'taking of metaphors for realities'. Agulhon himself, in his chapter on 1848 – one of the finest and most subtle passages in the book – gives us a perfect example of this process. On the barricades of June, women were paraded, dressed as Republics and carrying red flags. At the level of symbolism, they were the direct descendants of the 'goddesses' of the popular fêtes of the Great Revolution but, at another level, the bullets that mowed them down were real enough. So, just as the soldiers who discharged those bullets might be accused of making a 'mistake', it is just such 'mistakes' that concern us when we try to analyse the notion of, say, 'realism' in art.

But more than that. There are indeed shaded areas, where, under specific conditions, political and sexual meanings do not simply rub off on each other, because it suits one faction or another to label the Republic a prostitute, and its popular supporters as her clients. Rather these dissimilar meanings are made together out of the same kinds of needs, the needs, for example, to articulate quite definite forms of hegemony on the one hand, or resistance on the other. This sort of relationship is not, of course, unique to the French Second Empire, but it is under the Empire that we can point to a number of very clear instances of it. Here various elements of the legal system – copyright, censorship, the judiciary, etc. – combine to describe and to attempt the enforcement of general norms of sexual and marital behaviour. These, as we know, are formed around notions of social class as well as in reference to religious ideals and other philosophies, and form part of the ideological construction of an exploited class as an immoral and dangerous class. At the same time, as norms, they permit the living out of various hypocrisies that themselves are based upon the actual relations between the sexes. The organised practice of prostitution and its regulation for the middle-class consumer cuts across social life from the brothel to the stage, from the whore of the Rue Bréda to the *Lady of the Camellias*. And there are inevitably areas where no line can be drawn between the sexual, the political, the social meanings of various aspects of human behaviour and its diverse cultural representations. For a popular songster whose work might casually, and even unconsciously, excite uncertainty in the grey areas of social and sexual stability, retribution is as likely as it is random.

8 Agulhon 1981.

Why should the censors pick on a little song called ‘Don’t loose your bonnet’? In 1867 a bonnet might have been a red one. But also, according to Alfred Delvau, in his *Dictionnaire de l’érotique moderne* (1864), a bonnet is ‘la nature de la femme’ while ‘remettre son bonnet’ is, for a man, a synonym for detumescence.⁹ I suspect that this illicit publication, an erotic lexicon by such an eminent expert on popular language, who was also to the left of ‘bohème’, is as good a place as any to start looking at the overlapping of political and moral infractions at the levels of imagery and language. And I suspect also that the penetration of this level of confusion is precisely what is necessary to an understanding of the possible meanings of all kinds of image – meanings that will cut across from Mariannes to prostitutes in a way that is by no means an illusion of ‘socio-psychoanalytical’ fantasies. But more than that, the making of this kind of connection must become the stock-in-trade of any successful history of images, because images are almost always more than the expression of an opinion or a position.

Again, it is not feasible to limit a study of imagery to a single form of production, or even to a small range of expressive media, as in *Marianne*. Political (and sexual) meanings found their way into toothpicks as well as into public statues, into fairground shooting ranges as well as medals, into visiting cards, buttons or scarves as well as coins or political journals. The forms available for the articulation of such meanings are as diverse as the shades of meaning themselves, and are located as much within the causal gestures of daily life as within the pomp of official occasions or the struggles on the barricades. Of all historians, Professor Agulhon must be aware of this, but nowhere does he make such knowledge part of the fundamental structure of his method. On the contrary, by limiting this knowledge to the realm of caveats, he opens the way not to a more careful interpretation of his imagery, but to one that is far too etiolated.

In a generally very interesting section on 1870–1 he refers to the popular usage of the image of the statue as an expression of political ideals. Quoting the words of Tridon, a follower of Blanqui and a Communard of 1871, Agulhon asserts that ‘The theme of the statue, which seems so conventional, academic and out of touch to us today, was enthusiastically included even in the language of the extreme revolutionary Left’.¹⁰ Yes – indeed it was, but just to the extent that no section of society is excluded from its common language usages, and it seems to me that the image of a statue was common enough to simile,

9 Delvau 1864a.

10 Agulhon 1981.

metaphor or metonym. The artist Ingres was referred to as being like a bronze bust, for example. But elsewhere, and more within the area of our subject, Carpeaux's decoration for the new Opéra, *La Danse*, acquired a variety of significations. Initially criticised from an Academic standpoint, it also came to serve as an image of the decadence of the Second Empire amongst a number of its enemies. The Communard Jean-Baptist Clément used it in this way, as did the principal radical journal of 1869–70, the *Marseillaise* of Henri Rochefort. Here the Left could use the image (in a critical rather than an affirmative sense) precisely because the use of imagery is an everyday element of spoken and written languages alike. Tridon's own writings – his booklet on Hébert, for instance – are quite rich in visual references. It is, among other things, then, quite difficult for Agulhon to sustain his thesis on the unique centrality of statuary in Republican discourse without studying the frequency of its use as an image beyond the limits of his own objectives. And, at the same time, this study itself would have to be closely tied in with an understanding of the relation between visual and other language forms.

There are a whole number of points, some very small, some more extensive, where Professor Agulhon has really not looked either sufficiently widely or sufficiently carefully. His section on the Commune of 1871 is largely based, he tells us, on his observations of the centennial exhibition held at St. Denis in 1971 – a very fine exhibition, as it happens. There, among the prints, he noted a predominance of red in the colours – though not, it would seem, the relation of red as a Republican colour to red as a royal colour. Among other important points, he draws our attention to various developments of the red hat, and to the fact that the some-time provençale Marianne has now become the urban Commune – two politically related but different phenomena. But, in a footnote to which he gives some weight, he writes:

One print favourable to the Commune represents the antagonism between Paris and Versailles by setting up an opposition between a Louis XIV in state robes (inspired by Rigaud's famous portrait) and a Woman draped in robes, wearing a cap and holding a *rifle*. In our view this is quite original and in keeping with the times. The modern weapon brings the old fashioned allegory closer to reality.¹¹

(The print has clearly been seen only in reproduction.) There are a number of questions we might ask. Were guns not used in 1789 or 1848, and is it even a

11 Agulhon 1981.

modern weapon that she holds? What other references are there to guns in the political prints and language of the Commune? What would be the significance of a Marianne riding, say, a bicycle, as one appeared in a radical journal in 1877? Why, in a later passage of his book, does Agulhon mention the use of the *cog-wheel* to symbolise labour in the Third Republic, without dwelling on the really very modern implications of that? And, what if this particular cartoon is not pro-Commune at all? For indeed it is not. Referring to the original, the Louis and the Woman are equally represented as stubborn, sour types, arrogantly refusing each other's glance. The *caption* reads 'Looking at each other like china dogs'. The implication is clearly that of 'a plague on both your houses' – the struggle is a foolish, toy struggle, however cruel. This was one possible attitude to the Commune – one held by both Doré and Daumier, for example. A small error, perhaps, but indicative of the very failure of method that I have tried to outline up to this point.

It is just because, in this instance, Agulhon has not looked at the details of convention and expression in the image, their relative normality, or deviance and so forth, that he is led to overestimate the presence of the rifle in an essentially arbitrary manner. He informs us elsewhere that his overview of the imagery of the Great Revolution has been based on the exhibition held at the Musée Carnavalet in 1978. He does not, however, tell us that this exhibition presented some 400 prints from a possible several thousand, that it was highly selective to the point of showing Royalist bias, and that it was lacking in any mainstream of Jacobin imagery. Insofar, then, as this is the basis of his argument, it must be taken as guesswork – albeit guesswork that is itself founded on his immeasurable historical knowledge. In the main I am convinced by some of his guesses. My complaints are not levelled at his guessing as such, rather at an attitude to the evolution of visual ideologies that is at once both cavalier and inadequate, and that takes little or no account of the very real advances made in art history in the last decade or so. There are some excellent passages in *Marianne*, but even these – the chapter on 1848, the section on the provinces from 1870 to 1875 – are underlined by a refusal to move beyond a 'common sense' approach to the interpretation of his material. In the end, I am forced to conclude that the basic programme *is* itself at fault. To look at the history of one kind of image – at first sight this seems like the only way to steer a path through so much, and such disparate, source material. And this really should work – provided that the chosen image is used as a heuristic device, as well as a method of simplification, a device that precipitates the most general problems of interpretation, and not just those that are narrowly germane to its own limited political significance. In the end, *Marianne* is old-fashioned iconography plus old-fashioned political history.

So, if *Marianne* is altogether a disappointment, a volume that is hardly worthy of its author, what kinds of issues are implicated in its failure? I am fairly certain that they are important, and that they are just those issues that most need to be resolved to continue the development of the relationship between different disciplines within the writing of history. It is all too easy at the moment to think of quite major works of social history – *The Age of Revolutions* and *The Age of Capital* by Professor Hobsbawm are two – that contain chapters on art history of a quite surprising ‘maiserie’.¹² If, for example, the history of an individual artist can hardly be written without a proper theory of critical reception and critical fortune, that requires particular methods of reading the documents in their passage through time, there is no exactly equivalent skill required in the reading, say, of the most complicated police records, in constructing the history of a type of criminality. Each requires specific systems of knowledges and skills, which might in *some* techniques overlap, but which are far from identical. The problem of disciplinary formation is very obvious in this respect but it cannot be overcome by an act of will or intention, by a desire to apply a synthesis whose parts must be separately learned. Agulhon’s rejection of Boime’s ideas, or his caustically accurate remark on the potential problems of psychoanalytical method, reveal only a very one-sided appreciation of this situation. It would seem that his historical skills have armed him not only against what is dangerous in more ‘deconstructive’ methods of work, but also against what is valuable.

In his important and interesting foray in the opposite direction, from art to political history, Jim Rubin illustrates just the same problem.¹³ Taking as his starting point the notion that the word ‘atelier’ in the title of Courbet’s allegory of real life would, in its time, have resonated with references to the place where workers as well as artists work, he states the obvious. The obvious that is, to a student of social history, if not, perhaps, to many professors in institutes of Fine Art. Be that as it may, Rubin has chosen an excellent point of entry into his subject, which is a fresh interpretation of Courbet’s *Atelier*, one that consciously follows on in the steps of Meyer Schapiro, but which also rethinks a whole range of problems.¹⁴ It is a very short book – too short, I think – that is divided into a sequence of ten small essays. Three of their titles – ‘Courbet as a Worker Painter’, ‘Proudhon’s Concept of Liberty’, and ‘The Social Question and Landscape’, will serve to suggest their range and essentially theoretical approach to the painting. It is Rubin’s concern to show that, while

¹² Hobsbawm 1962a, and 1962b.

¹³ Rubin 1980.

¹⁴ Schapiro 1941.

there are very crucial differences of political philosophy between Courbet and Proudhon, and their understanding of each other, Courbet in fact had a very definite conception not only of the structure of Proudhon's politics, but of how to make it enter into the planning and production of his own work.

Courbet himself articulated a notion of artistic freedom that was to find its most heady expression, not within the social movements of the mid-century, but more through the powerful anarchistic subjectivism of the 1880s and 1890s. Proudhon, on the contrary, believed that art was exemplary of wider social forces, a symptom of the health or sickness of a given society, a factor in its development or its decay. If the two men found a specific basis for unity, it was in their belief in art as a fundamentally artisanal production process, an epitome of dignified, skilled and responsible hand labour. That elements in Courbet made possible his later depoliticisation, and his construction as a source of modernism, is due to the historically-determined collapse of the objective basis for the existence of such an ideal relationship. In the end, the view of labour that linked Courbet and Proudhon was backward looking – rendered untenable by the accelerating division of labour and the rise of machine production. It is in this area that Rubin's arguments are lacking in refinement. Having presented the 'atelier' as the site of dignified labour in the theories of Courbet and Proudhon, he does not consider the meaning of their ideas in relation to the realities of working-class life. An 'atelier' might equally have been a place of unskilled as of skilled work, and, even for skilled workers, a place of hardship and bitter exploitation. Much of the recent work of the younger French social historians, writers like Alain Cottereau or Jacques Rancière,¹⁵ has displaced the traditional romances of skilled labour, and profoundly problematised our notions about the composition and ideologies of the Parisian working class. Perhaps in the end, despite their differences, Courbet and Proudhon were equally remote from these complex realities.

But, as I have already suggested, Rubin's overall project is extremely useful. He gives us an excellent account of the reasons for the centrality of the landscape that Courbet is working on in his *Atelier*. He argues first, through a close reading of the appropriate texts of Courbet and Proudhon, that the *Atelier* is based upon Proudhon's views on the stages of human development. It is a

15 See the essays collected in Rifkin and Thomas (ed.) 1988. Two very different kinds of text but equally significant for questioning some traditional notions of labour history are Cottereau's introduction to Poulot 1980 and Rancière's article on the workers and the 1867 Exposition in *Revoltes Logiques* no. 1 (Rancière 1978). The more recent Rancière 1983b is an even more radical departure into a new reading of working-class culture that has widespread implications for the writing of cultural history.

development in which art is a crucial expression of man's essential duality, and in which, for Courbet, landscape became the purest mode of artistic expression. In the *Atelier*:

The notion that pure landscape was a vulgar genre because it treated nature as it was, rather than as, in classical parlance, it 'ought to be', was reversed to uphold nature as the only positive form of the real. Pure landscape painting thus became the most telling metaphor for Courbet's entire realist enterprise with his artistic ritual epitomizing all of human activity and its product symbolized as pure landscape, he clearly suggested that the key to liberation was a vision of reality that eliminated all external presuppositions in favour of material truth.¹⁶

This kind of approach can be readily substantiated through a reading of Thoré-Burger's salons, for example, and it is a pity that Rubin only refers to his important letter to Théodore Rousseau in a footnote.

By way of reservation I must reinforce my earlier criticism – that Rubin pays too little attention to the historically problematic aspects of the meaning of texts and utterances. Thus he tends to take Courbet's own declarations of intent, whether spoken or painted, at face value, almost as if they were free from the impact of the market, the demands of patrons, and the artist's own inevitable, if grudging, response to them. Rubin's presentation of the mutually advantageous relationship of Courbet and Bruyas is new and important. For Bruyas, Courbet was an artist to live out his theories of art; for Courbet, Bruyas meant financial independence – a practical independence of the kind that he declared in his famous letter to Nieuwekerke. But, assuredly, when he met Bruyas, Courbet was an artist already formed through the random effects of the mid-nineteenth-century artistic system. Even if his relation with Bruyas had really worked, he could not have wished these effects away – had he even known exactly what they were. To a certain extent then, the method of art history that depends on the centrality of the transcendent artistic subject still lingers as an effect in Rubin's otherwise scrupulous historical analysis. Anyway his book gets a lot nearer to the mark than *Marianne*.

16 Rubin 1980.

No Particular Thing to Mean

Introduction

There seems to be an emerging awareness that one of the outstanding problems in the deconstitution of art history as an academic subject remains the status of the art-object itself, as a historical form of production, as a site of the intersection of various ideologies, and in terms of how it is understood as an object of knowledge. Awareness that is, that this is a problem and that it is grossly under-theorised. The way in which this problem is confronted will shape the elements of a new art history, in what way or if at all it requires the epithets of art or design. In some respects the new and progressive art histories of the last decade, that have embarked on particular methods of historicising the artwork, have as much intensified the problems as they have resolved them. In Tim Clark's work, for example, the fundamental issues of the reception of works of art and its diverse meanings have been broached.¹ But in one way or another, we are always left somewhere in the Louvre or, of late, in the Jeu de Paume. That is to say, in a highly privileged space, one of whose functions remains the equipment of our own cultural outlooks with the hierarchies of its privileges. Clark's Louvre is very differently peopled from that of college visits or the artistic biographies produced in the Institutes of art. The conditions through which the works hanging there began to acquire their importance through various kinds of historical process are interpolated between us and the painting. But quite often it is like going out where you came in, and the historicisation acts like a sort of immanent meaning of the artwork, as if the source – the real source, of its timeless values. Even, pleasure in it is intensified through the knowledge of its historical profundity, and it gets represented as the file of new struggles.

For instance it can be seen as the proper place of a struggle for an appropriation of values by art historians of left and right alike. Or, one step on, if appropriation itself is not an objective, then a painting can still be the field of a conflict of tendencies at a level at which academic method and cultural politics overlap. To the right of this relatively safe terrain lies the sociology of a Baxend-

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1 Clark 1973b, and 1973a.

all in which a complex but soothing group of methods explains everything at the expense of theory, or possibly nothing at all.² If I remark on these things here, it is not to suggest that this essay is going to provide any answers. Rather I want to place it by detaching it from a notion that is residually important in the debates that they pose. This is the notion that there needs to be a contradiction between 'high' and 'low' art forms, and that the elaboration of this contradiction is a means of combatting some unjust ideas of quality ...

In Schapiro or Clark,³ for instance, popular prints or songs, and their contemporary commentaries and types of appropriation, are made to serve the analysis of the always more comprehensive meaning of a painting from the Louvre – Courbet's *Funeral at Ornans* or *Atelier* are the principal subjects. This process also tends to confer quasi-immanent meanings on the museum art, even if these meanings at times become unfixed in the confusions of social life. If we were to respond to it by asserting the independence of the popular prints as such, we would have to engage ourselves in a welter of categorical muddles held together by a well-established language of dominant values and qualities. The prints 'are as good as' or 'are unjustly neglected' etc. etc. This might get the print out of whichever museum it's in, municipal history or social anthropology, into a temporary showing in the Louvre, and so reinstate its hierarchisation with shuffled terms. So in making some political prints the occasion of this piece, I want to emphasise that they are not being endowed either with any imaginary privilege or with its lack. They are a starting point for the consideration of some problems of analysis – a starting point that is not, in this instance, excessively over-determined by systems of values that one would wish to dismantle, or, as a pro-tem measure, marginalise. They are no more high than they are low, nor folk, nor popular, for that matter.

The essay itself is based on a number of talks that I gave to accompany an exhibition of some 200 of these prints that I made some years ago (c. 1980). It has thus had innumerable inputs, and follows the final presentation more or less exactly. I had thought to say that it is a preliminary sketch for a much longer, more definitive etc. etc., but since the preliminary sketch has become more or less a vocation, it would be silly. The reproductions are all black and white, and so their colour coding is lost.

2 See, e.g., the way in which he is extracted in Bourdieu 1981.

3 See Schapiro 1978; Clark 1973b.

No Particular Thing to Mean

The print shown in Figure 4 was produced in Paris during the first few months of 1871. It is not possible to date it precisely either by means of the 'legal deposit' system, which was not working at this point of revolutionary confusion of the state, nor by its subject matter, which is of a kind that remained topical over a period of time. In histories of the siege and the Commune, or in illustrated books devoted to the visual imagery of the time, it receives, as far as I can see, no attention. It is a print of very little importance. Nonetheless it is one of the very few images out of thousands printed that attracted any kind of a detailed comment from a professional writer or critic – in this case, the art critic Duranty. He made a brief remark about it in one of a series of three articles that he published in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* in 1871 in the months after the suppression of the Commune. The series deals with imagery in Europe during the Franco-Prussian war and the siege of Paris, and only one of them concentrates on Parisian material – material which, at this point, was politically hot, and remained so for the rest of the decade. All the printed texts and imagery that had escaped censorship during the revolutionary uprisings were placed under a blanket interdiction by the Thiers government, and those addict-collectors who wanted to amass it – there were quite a number of them – had to be quick off the mark to get examples before they were wiped out by the tribunals, the poster service of the Paris police etc. Any published commentaries on the images, posters and proclamations that were circulated necessarily reproduced the dominant anti-Communard propaganda, cynically branding their subject as the manifestation of political disease, filth, hypocrisy and improper and unreasonable desires to disturb established order. Thus a trio of little volumes like those of Firmin-Maillard, for example, both confirmed the need for the military and judicial massacre of the Commune, and, at the same time, provided collectors with a detailed run down of items of interest – a connoisseur's guide to the scum.⁴

Duranty, addressing himself to an audience more distanced from the arenas of political turbulence, wrote in a very different tone. His account is marked by a detached, intelligent and measured assessment of his subject. If the emphasis of his analysis lies with Daumier, Doré and Puvis de Chavannes, whose imagery constitutes a mildly humanistic-to-reactionary despair at the unfolding of events, he does not feel himself bound to place everything else beyond the realm of explanation. He does not characterise it simply as filth or garbage: rather he insists that the imagery itself is as exceptional as the epoch, no more

4 Firmin-Maillard 1871, 1874, and 1905.

and no less unfortunate than the conjuncture that produced it. Thus it can be excepted from the mainstream of the French national tradition of political satire, and understood as an object of interest without embarrassment. The balance of attention in Duranty, and the kinds of discrimination that he tries to make are quite deeply symptomatic of a wider process in art history. A process, that is, through which certain elements of overtly political art-forms, such as the work of Daumier, are attached to aesthetic criteria that allow these criteria to become their main signification in place of their historically specific meanings. These latter, for instance Daumier's critical and radical position on some political and social issues, become supernumerary, explicable primarily through historical context as an adjunct to more 'profound' aesthetic exegetics. One important spin-off from this is the emergence of the well-known distinction between quality and meaning in works of art, which is a nodal point of innumerable different processes of social ordering and hierarchies. In this light Duranty's emphasis could be said to be overdetermined by the same needs, ways of thinking etc. that produce the texts that are engaged in overt political abuse, and his concentration on the 'unimportant' image in figure 10, as one of the few 'popular' fly-sheets to attract him, takes on more sense. Lacking quality, it is more readily susceptible to analysis.

He wrote of it:

But in the general concert (of posters) I find only one that really sounds out of tune. It imitates the penny-game called shoe-smiths. In the place of a block is a peasant's head. From one side a Prussian bashes on it, from the other the figure of a French admiral or a republican officer – it is not easy to work out which. It is a real cry of provincial reaction, astray in the democratic tumult of Paris. It is a demand of the countryside against the delegation of war. At the same time, given the exception of dated newspapers, it is impossible to be precise about the date of these fly-sheets, which are sometimes isolated, published after the event, some of which disappear and reappear according to the fluctuations of political regimes.

Duranty, then, is drawn to the image because he reads it as an isolated voice of provincial reaction. Yet the means for him to reach such a decision are markedly absent. In the first instance it would depend on the precise identification of the figure, as the distinction between an admiral and a republican officer would be crucial to the exact object of the satire. In the second place the dating of the print would be no less crucial in deciding which republic, if it is anti-republican, it is aimed against – the government of National Defence, or the Commune.

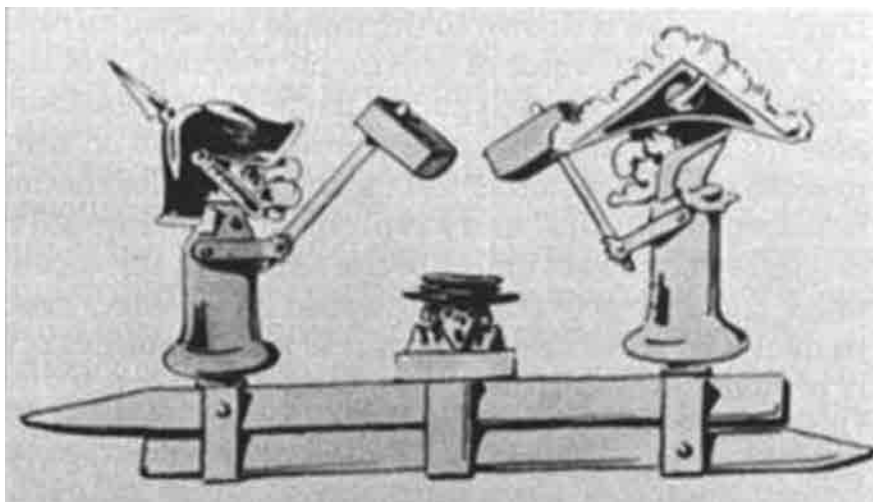


FIGURE 4 *The War in the Provinces*



FIGURE 5 *Amusement of the Garrison*

government of Paris, which the official government accused of holding up the settlement of a peace with Prussia as well as of planning to seize the peasants' land. Differently, if it were set alongside the torrent of anti-communard images that were produced after its suppression in the 'Bloody Week' it would be

difficult to see it as an isolated voice of reaction. Nor could Duranty have been unaware of a continuum of anti-radical publication throughout the whole period of his study. And further, had he seen, or chosen to see, whichever – the series to which the print belongs, its meaning as a part of that series might have become much more obvious. Since a very large number of these political prints were published in series or thematic groups it would have been a reasonable tactic to look for comparative material of the same kind. The entirety of this particular series still exists intact in at least one collection (Victoria and Albert Museum). It is called *Wooden Sabre* and from our own viewpoint it falls quite definitely within a broad spectrum of radical critiques of the entire conduct of the war with Prussia, both under the Second Empire, which embarked on it, and the Republican governments of Thiers, that concluded (i.e. lost) it. One element in its mode of satire is the representation of different aspects of the war and its politics as toys or games of one kind or another, and it touches on a number of the most widespread objects of discontent. For instance, it also attacks the claim of the general in command of defence, Trochu, to have a ‘plan’ – a ‘plan’ that became notorious for its absence, for its obscurity, or for being nothing other than a covert capitulation. Satirising Trochu’s claims had no necessary link with anti-republicanism, even if the satire could address itself to a very wide range of disaffected opinions from royalist to revolutionary.

However, there are two unusual elements in *Wooden Sabre*. One of these is the highly elliptical metaphors of some of its numbers, which make any reading of them difficult – much more difficult than in Figure 4. This removes them from the type of political simplification that is characteristic of most political prints. The second is indeed their very obvious sympathy to the plight of the countryside as the site of war. Figure 5, which is the next in line from Figure 4, is clear enough. It is here, in the nature of the political language of the moment, that the particular tendency of Duranty’s reading is to be located. Basically it is not made from within the image in its use of the types of figure that appear in it, an accurate evaluation of these and their relation to other prints, but from the dominant use of the word ‘rural’ in the opening months of 1871. After the election of a new National Assembly at the end of January – the assembly that took its sessions in Bordeaux, away from the military arena, it became clear that the rural electorate had returned a Royalist majority. About 400 of some 675 deputies, leaving the revolutionaries and bourgeois or liberal democrats in a tiny minority. It was these that the Marseilles revolutionary Crémieux denounced as *rurals*, and his use of the word rapidly passed into political language as a synonym for reactionary – a meaning that would have been recognised, if not accepted, across the political spectrum. In Duranty’s comment, then, this recognition is sufficiently powerful to attach itself to a representation of the



FIGURE 6 *Marcia, Le Travail, c'est la liberté, mid-late May 1871*

countryside as such. But also, after the military suppression of the Commune and the unfolding of the great show trials of its leaders and supporters, this recognition would have had a number of political virtues, that function to mediate the relation of Paris to the provinces in terms of a complex of political allegories.



FIGURE 7 *The Signs of the Zodiac no. 10 – Club for the emancipation of women. A Scorpion in her ugly mug.*

As indicated, the official government was at pains to depict the Commune as the enemy of the countryside, both in its social ambitions that aimed at collective ownership, and as delaying the signing of a peace with Prussia when the countryside was cruelly affected by the war. Such propaganda could deflect the blame for the misconduct of the war from the government and suggest that there was no resistance either to the government's politic or independent resistance to the Prussians amongst the rural population. The dangerous effects of this were seen by the Commune which launched an appeal for common cause with the country, without, however, being able to make it heard. And they were brutally felt by the Communards when finally defeated by a government army largely recruited from the rural populations. However, the situation is even more convoluted. Insofar as Paris could be represented as the prize for which the French were to fight for their national salvation both against the foreign enemy and the enemy within – the revolutionaries of Paris – then to that extent deliverance would depend upon the further subjugation of the interests of the provinces to Paris. The long term process of the economic, political and ideological predominance of the metropolis could unfold in part through a particular image of Commune Paris as the enemy of the provinces. In this context it would be almost inconceivable that an image like Figure 5 could be read as anything other than a cry of reaction. But again, in choosing to comment on an image that he can construe as reactionary, Duranty both delivers himself from the need to reiterate the same kind of abuse against the radical imagery as his more scatological colleagues: and, in neglecting the actually reactionary imagery, allows it to do its work undisturbed. By the more humanistic artistic standards of a Daumier or a Doré, the cartoons that rendered the Communards as subhuman had even less to recommend them than some of the most amateur of radical flyers. Free from censorship, their work was best done in silence. To have drawn attention to their 'quality' could only have subverted them. From one perspective Duranty, an astute, professional critic, misreads the print: from another, he does no more than traverse it as an element in a dominant mode of political thought that enables him to articulate it himself. In this sense the social signification of the image cannot be precisely fixed within any one set of determinations.

Yet this fixing is typically the objective of much analytical or historical work that is done on political imagery. In one way it does lend itself to a highly restricted interpretation – that is, insofar as it is political. Or rather, insofar as the notion of political that it represents and the political determinations of the process of interpretation coincide within a static and one-dimensional conception of politics. The objectification of complex social and ideological movements into a relation between individuals or groups of individuals drawn from the

dominant ranks of professional politicians is still reproduced in school-book histories, television news, 'investigative' journalism, anti-hagiographies such as 'de-Stalinisation' etc., and is itself a caricatural procedure. Political prints are, more often than not, an aspect of this way of thinking, and serve to confirm its apparent operational validity, even if, at the same time, they have the advantage of genuinely concentrating complicated relations into a form through which they can be realised and fought over. Given the accuracy of the assertion that the Paris Commune was essentially a social revolutionary movement, of which the narrowly political forms were conjuncturally produced, then the political prints produced around it take on a particular interest. Among the thousands of subjects both for and against, only a handful are concerned with the 'social', with the issues that were generated within popular and working-class organisations as means of social transformation. One or two, for instance, touch on the question of rents. But none at all on the organisation of social production through association or cooperation: this remains wholly within the domain of written or spoken political argument. Primarily the prints replicate the dominant political concentration on individuals or types, and the emergence of a complexly structured social perception out of them is tangential and relational. If they are often complete political utterances, they are seldom more than phonemes of the social.

This difficult entry into a method of reading them is well concealed in their historiography, which has been constructed through needs which limit them to a totemic function. If, in the earliest stages of their history, they passed into the control of the police and the cupboards of a few collectors, their next use was as a dark point, a negative example in the official histories of French caricature. The inception of their separation from Daumier, Doré et al in Duranty is completed by Grand-Cartaret in the 1880s and 1890s.⁵ In his books they are definitively consigned to the dustbin, the link between undesirable political intentions and bad art is sewn up more tightly: in one case an image by Pilo-tell, one of the rare professional printmakers who was also a Communard, is especially blamed because it quotes an iconography of Daumier, thus dragging it into the mire, and stripping it of the humanistic connotation that lets it act as art. Grand-Cartaret's tactic effectively contains 'analysis' within the realm of intention, and confines meaning to the narrowly specific, non-social reading. It is a tactic that is implicitly accepted by later social historians, especially in the

5 The best available bibliography on the Commune is the University of Sussex Library Commune Collection, Printed Catalogue. This lists three publications of Maillard, on Posters, Newspapers and fly-sheets respectively. Their general interest is in both listing the material and in needling it, in winking out signs of weakness and ill faith, etc.

1950s–1970s, who are sympathetic to the Commune and write as its partisans. For them their acceptance of the prints as an object of commentary or a source of illustration – the latter principally – signifies their own political opposition to the reactionary or liberal denigration of the Commune, and their sympathy with its revolutionary politics. This is clearly a necessary stage in the development of an historical position, and in the establishment of a Marxist view of labour history. But at the same time it is liable to lead to alternative idealist readings of the prints through describing their meaning as fixed and attributing them to an intention that is now designated as virtuous rather than as wicked. Equally the pecking order in relation to Daumier is also accepted. Some of the radical printmakers – Pilotell, for example – can easily be rescued from the calumny of poor draughtsmanship through reference to dominant notions of quality. They can thus appear not only as virtuous but also as relatively good. This judgement reinforces the notion that the actual object of good caricature, like good art, should be universality. The need even to enter a dispute on the grounds of quality constantly refers matters back to the bourgeois norms that politically and socially are the focus of opposition. The ideological complex that endows quality with its awesome power then yet again subverts the analysis of the prints, which are abstracted from the generality of visual and verbal languages and totemistically attached to the desire to read socialism into them. The anti-commune prints too lose any meaning other than that allowed them in their role as one side of a purely Manichean conflict. (One corollary of this is the absurd view that the Commune failed to develop a good culture because it only lasted 72 days!)

In addition the relation of intention and meaning is further fetishised through the use of biography. To the extent that an artist (or poet, or songwriter) can be shown to have sacrificed their talent for politics, or suffered for it in some way, he can also be recruited as a forerunner of the progressive artist of the present century. He can be inserted into the discourse that still affects some left-wing politicians and theoreticians of art, in which the sacrifice of an artist is worth literally hecatombs of workers, Jews or other violently oppressed classes or groups – a sacrifice that is invested by the dominant bourgeois conception of art with its whole nexus of market values, social hierarchy etc. The predominant role of intention and will in this discourse both prevents the elaboration of a refined materialist analysis and distorts the proper use of biographical material as a form of historical evidence. For instance, the formation of professional political cartoonists can be seen as an explanatory element of the lack of images directly concerned with social themes. Consistently pro-Communard draughtsmen like Pilotell or Moloch appear to have lived through a social grouping of *declassé*, bohemian intellectuals – art school

drop-outs, journalists etc. who characteristically sympathised with an extreme Jacobin tradition in French politics – though Courbet who is partially implicated in such circles, pronounced himself anti-Jacobin and socialist. However, we would expect this type of political tendency to be more interested in the fight around long standing radical issues like anti-clericalism rather than the establishment of specifically working-class positions. The conjuncture of this kind of interest with other aspects of Communard politics – the disestablishment of the Church, for example, can be seen as a fruitful basis in explaining the quantity of anti-clerical imagery in Pilotell, Moloch and other cartoonists, as well as its widely differentiated inflections and objectives. But this can never be more than a very partial explanation, and does not necessarily enter into the problem of meaning. Even so, it is a fundamentally different use of biography to that of good intentions.

If modern socialist histories of the Commune replicate the artistic criteria of a virulent conservative tradition, there is hardly a model for them on the left. Although many Communard leaders who escaped or survived the slaughter and trials wrote detailed political memoirs during the 1870s and 80s, they are strikingly silent on political imagery. They certainly provide no coherent reception through which it can be understood. Only rarely do they comment on individual printmakers, and then anecdotally, in relation to their political activities rather than their professional work. It would be difficult on this basis, to argue that the prints were actually unimportant. They were much more than a decorative fringe to the 'real' fabric of social conflict. On the contrary, they formed an integral part of its environment and conscious articulation. Most conservative writers who mention them speak of their wide-scale circulation, the archives of the Paris police indicate the vast extent of flyposting and the problems of clearing it up in the months after the end of May. One police record notes the distribution of cartoons by Pilotell out in the suburb of St. Denis – in this instance by young men dressed as symbolic figures of the radical republic. Some of the images themselves show street scenes in which prints are pasted thickly on the walls. The signs of their omnipresence in the city are numerous, and it would be safe to suppose that they were as normal a part of politics as written and spoken language alike. The main reason to notice them especially would have been overall opposition to, distance from, or disgust with the movements within which they existed, as well as the desire to collect them, suppress them and so on. Otherwise they would have signified, imprecisely, in the general flux.

James Leith, in an essay on these prints, writes from a supposedly 'objective' viewpoint, that is neither of the right nor the left. This enables his work to exemplify the reduced reading of which the inadequacies have been suggested. He concludes his sketchy commentary on 100 images ...

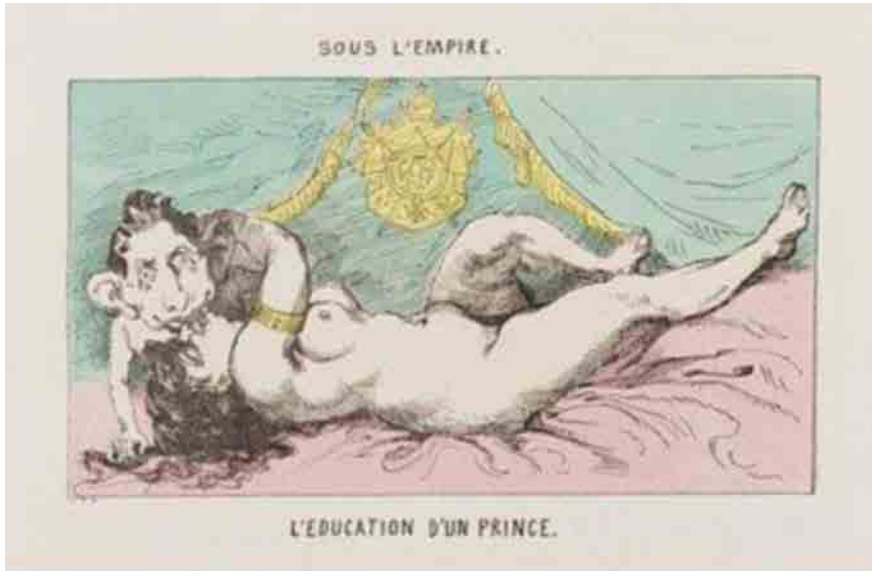


FIGURE 8 *Under the Empire – A Prince's education*

All this visual material has its limitations as historical evidence, especially the works of the left-wing artists. One does not learn much about actual living and working conditions from their drawings. There are almost no scenes of housing, workshops or factories. Also it was easier to ridicule the old régime than to depict the nature of the future society which they hoped to create. Part of the reason for this was that the Communards were not united on any precise conception of the future order, though some of them dreamt of a cooperative classless society. But the main reason that the positive message was weak was the obvious one that caricature was essentially a negative art. There were of course positive elements – Communard heroes, smiling workers, allegorical figures on rising suns, but these scarcely conveyed any clear vision of the future. And for right wing artists negative weapons generally sufficed. Yet despite these limitations the graphic propaganda, like the songs of the period, help us to recapture the spirit of the day ...⁶

The idea that the use of negative weapons and lack of clear vision can 'help us to recapture the spirit of the day' could be laughed off were it not for the

⁶ Leith 1978.



FIGURE 9 (The Versailles Museum) – *The Three Graces*. (Picard, Thiers, Faure).

fact that this notion of imagery as ‘historical evidence’ is so widespread among even quite sophisticated historians. It is interesting that Leith devotes two lines to the image in Figure 6 without noticing that it contains just some of what he’s looking for – a little factory on the upper right side. We will return to this; for the moment it is his dismissal of ‘rising suns’ etc. that concerns us. Take this quotation from a radical paper of more or less Jacobin tendencies, *l’Homme*, in

its issue of 9 March 1871, just over a week before the Communard uprising.⁷ It is from an article attacking the Prussian monarch and his Krupp canons, warning him that if the old French empire cannot defeat him, then a new, Universal Republic will:

This sovereignty (of the republic) is the peoples' sovereignty, which dawned in 1789, and it will soon conquer the darkness and shine throughout Europe in all the force of its majesty. This is the sovereignty of which a ray shone on the Fourth of September 1870, to illuminate France as a challenge thrown to despots ...

The image of light and dark, sunrise and sudden illumination, is very typical of this kind of political discourse: its appearance in this randomly selected example is one of probably hundreds of similar instances. But, at the same time that it is a common rhetoric, it is hardly symptomatic of political bankruptcy, lack of ideas or of a programme. Much more, it is a way of thinking, a rhetoric which can be inflected to produce highly particular political positions, both within a range of common beliefs and in opposition to enemies. Obviously it overlaps with longer standing vocabularies, whether religious or political, and one important aspect of its history is the appropriation of the image of the sun for a republican as distinct from a royalist discourse. A newspaper like *l'Homme*, though small scale and short-lived, could elaborate subtle analyses of problems across a whole gamut of issues, from the role of visual arts in revolution to the meaning of the different constitutions of the 1789 Revolution, yet it is precisely through the dominant vocabulary that it produces and communicates its positions, and structures them into political enjoinders and invocations, slogans and other calls to action, that are part of the political psychology of the revolutionary process.⁸

It is true to say that not every Communard, or the Commune as an organisation, had an agreed plan of action or a coherent view of a new society. Many of the new forms of social practice that emerged under the Commune or were encouraged by it were hardly tried experiments, whether the formation of worker associations or cooperative restaurants, the building of collective forms of political life or women's groupings – experiments that had a short history and

⁷ Thanks to E.W. Schulkind for the reference to *l'Homme*.

⁸ Dubois 1962 is the most complete recension and exhaustive theorisation of political language. It is a fundamental basis for this essay, although it would take years of statistical work to apply its principles to 4,000 or more political prints. Partly, then, my procedure is a metaphor of his, especially when I use a term like 'phoneme'.

an unimaginable future, that had been carried out, perhaps as covert forms of other purposes, such as the organisation of unions under the Empire, and so on. The images that represent republicanism, the universal republic, the social and universal republic, the direction and notation of political change and the objects of political desires, the colours of these images and affective descriptions of them, their different types of figurative element and the emphases of political positions that emerge through them, commonly articulate all forms of political discourse. If there is nowhere any single, coherent plan for a future society, this is in part because the revolutionary processes are highly cognitive ones that disclose possibilities rather than predict them. The penumbra of disclosure is filled with images that recede or become more precise, or are replaced as the processes occur. Even to suggest that they are 'indispensable' is to allow an imaginary separation, or a factitious possibility of willing them differently. This is not to say that the imagery is not spoken through different individuals, with contingently different relations to it. One of the most social depictions of the Commune as rich versus poor was the work of a cartoonist who was as ready to attack the Commune in June as he had been to praise it in March. A highly professional cartoon-journalist, like Faustin, earned his living through a rapid response not only to the turn of political events, but also to the response of his market to a greater or lesser degree of precision, or 'committedness' to one cause or another in his work. And a committed draughtsman like Pilotell in the end gave up visual work under the pressure of administration delegated to him during the Commune. All of which further unfixes the meaning of imagery in terms of any one stable group of referents. We should add to this that the entire period from September 1870 to June 1871 was one of unparalleled experimentation in political imagery in France. The progressive collapse of the system of censorship meant that, at a time of ferocious conflict, the censors ceased to form the principal element of the cartoonists' audience. So we can say that in the production of imagery also there was a process of the opening up of new kinds of learning.

Figure 7 is as virulently an anti-Communard image as there is to be found. The cracked, diseased and ugly figure is supposed to be the emancipated woman of the Commune, sitting in a women's club. The caption, 'A scorpion in her ugly mug', describes both politics and drinking habits. It was alongside this kind of horrible abuse that the military and judicial massacre of the Communards took place – an abuse that removes them from the realm of 'normal' perceptions, and constitutes them as the object of any kind of social revenge. But it is in a continuity with standard or 'normal' modes of perception and representation that the potential effectiveness of such an image is to be understood. Figure 8 is an attack on the social manners of the Imperial family printed



FIGURE 10 *The Commune. They never will demolish her.*

some time after the fall of the Empire in September, 1870. It is the kind of print that Grand-Cartaret calls rubbishy, but which was only one of many disparaging references to the sexual habits of the Imperial family – references that could be interlinked with all kinds of political criticism. At one point it can



FIGURE 11 *Thiers assaults the Republic, Faure holds up a candle.*

be seen as close to certain forms of popular puritanism, a resistance to the lifestyle of the ruling class as constituted through luxury, waste and sexual depravity.⁹ The expropriation of wealth, the expropriation of sexual services through prostitution – both these are themes in critical texts of radical theorists, politicians and poets of the 1860s and before. The image of sexual depravity can stand for the whole structure of social inequalities, and be seen as entering into popular life through entertainment as well as direct forms of exploitation.¹⁰

9 Two supplementary examples of luxury and culture as a site of struggle: Gaillard fils, perhaps the only cartoonist who came from the skilled artisanal class, edited a little newspaper during the popular club movements of 1868–9, that presaged the political collapse of the Empire. It was called *The Orators of the Clubs*, and in the first issue he compared the use of cafes and dance halls for public meetings to the cleansing of a beautiful crystal from slimy filth – an image of Baudelairean intensity, but in the opposite sense.

Then, in 1871, the Commune decreed that the luxurious linen of the ex-imperial household should be used by its own *ambulance* services. It is possible to accumulate quite a number of examples of re-distributive fantasies and practices.

10 The main official history is Grand-Cartaret 1888. The principal modern hagiographies are some of the 1971 centenary publications, such as Feld and Hincker 1971. Some, however do make an interesting *illustrative* use of the images.

Certain writers, for example, condemned the spasmodic rise and fall of fashions for café-concert dancers with names like Rigolboche or Clodoche, saw them as diversions from a real working-class culture,¹¹ and compared them to Carpeaux's statue *La Danse* that he made for the facade of the new Paris Opéra – the archi-symbol of bourgeois luxury – in 1869. At the same time the open accusation of immorality was a specifically political criticism of a régime that enforced the strictest moral norms through a labyrinthine system of censorship, press controls, theatre licences and legal penalties. The production of a scatological image both defied the censors and the hypocrisy of the régime. But, moving in a different sense, the print could also have gained meaning precisely from the culture that such radicals condemned – from the sly 'dirty joke' café songs with titles like *Down with your Paws* and *My Neighbour's Jewel*, louche 'sociological' accounts of the corruption of country girls by urban prostitution, cultural practices that also, always, had to steer through the network of legal repressions.

In Figure 7 it is the working-class woman who is represented as corrupt and degenerate, an image that is constituted within the entire complex history of the representation of the popular classes as the 'dangerous' stratum of Parisian society, and which was projected into the accusations levelled against women Communards at their trials. In part it is also a product of the failure to regulate the new working classes of the city within the norms of middle-class moral aspirations, a failure that was itself partially predicated by the economic impossibility of living up to such norms. If concubinage was a regular practice for working-class men and women, it was easy enough for bourgeois moralists to see this as an inherent tendency to prostitution, while also fantasising it as a form of freedom. Sexual innuendo, sexual jealousy, social and political hatred, can all be supposed to overlap in such an image, but specifically in conditions where sexual imagery is otherwise constituted as a site of social conflict. Figures 9 and 10 which shows the official government at Versailles – Thiers, Favre and Picard, as political prostitutes dancing for the favour of royalist regimes, both contain another widespread referent – a referent to academic and museum art. If the ability to produce such images can be attributed to the professional formation of cartoonists, the importance of museum art in official culture, the Great Industrial Exhibitions, the importance of the Salon etc., it too gives rise to a means of signifying social difference. Implicitly the museum art is deprived of its supposedly de-sexualised universality, and is relocated in the turbulence of the political struggle, its nudity endowed with a lasciviousness

11 My thanks to Robert Tombs for indicating this important source to me.

that is an homology of political corruption. The middle-class aesthetic norm is turned back on itself, a process that conservative critics clearly felt when they searched for epithets to describe these kinds of print. And this further intersects with the representation of the Republic itself, the figure of Marianne, the Commune, or any of the other gradations of the classic female allegory.

The figure of the Commune, seen as the most powerful form of the Republic in Figure 10, reverses the equation of the Versailles Museum. Here the noble female figure, in whom sexual allure is minimalised in favour of a classical severity, appropriates the values and dignities of museum art in favour of the notion of the Commune itself. Attacked by the same gang who appear in the Museum, she enters into a relationship with them that is purely a trial of political strength. But the same kind of noble figure – sometimes nude – is seen to fend off sexual assault by these three characters in other cartoons, Figure 11, while another Commune, this time a sexualised version, more a ‘fille’ than a statue, undergoes the same fate in Figure 12. This last image is the work of Faustin, one of the most adept of professional opportunists, and it drew the attention of the poet Catulle Mendés.¹² In his anti-Communard memoirs, dashed off in the first spate of propaganda after the end of May, he devotes 6 pages to the subject of imagery, and comments on some dozen prints. He notes that the Republic is wearing her Phrygian cap ...

But this time she lies in a bed hung with red flags for curtains. Her shoulders a little too bare, perhaps, for a Republic, but she must be made attractive to her good friends the Federals ...

The notion that her sexuality, which is evidently drawn from low-class theatrical motifs, is aimed at attracting the affection of the Federals – the predominantly popular ranks of the Parisian national guards, who formed the initial basis of the March 18 uprising, returns us in a different form to the Scorpion. She too wears a semblance of a Phrygian cap, she is the image of the Commune as sexual repulsion, in counterpoint to Mendés’s vision of ‘her’ as cheap satisfaction, the object of pleasure for the populace, whom, incidentally, the government plan to rape. Mendés’s reading, like Duranty’s, is out of line with this aspect of the image: if Faustin is aiming to please enemies of the government, Mendés’s sense is made only from a different political moment, and a differing moral viewpoint. After the government *had* actually slaughtered the

12 Mendés 1871. A translation appeared in England under the name of a different author, John Leighton FSA, who illustrated it. The quotation is from Leighton 1978.

Commune, the rape appears to him only as theatre, 'like the robbers in Fra Diavolo', and is possibly justified by the Republic's drooping dress.

It is worth noting that none of the images of the Republic remove women from the distancing and objectifying effect of serving as the material for allegory. The tentative moves towards some kind of social emancipation that we can see in the women's movements of the Commune and in the speeches of the very few female leaders, like Paule Minck, can hardly be seen at all in cartoons and other prints. Rather, it is their negative that appears in caricatures of the women's clubs, images in which a psychopathology of popular insubordination is elaborated through a vicious ridicule. The 'profession' of prostitute, ragpicker and source of social disorder can all be readily combined, as in Figure 13, from a series called *Memories of the Commune*. But at one level, this image has something in common with the most idealised of the red republics.

To return to Figure 6 we can now begin to see some serious complexities in its meaning. The central figure of a moderate, middle-class republic, free from any of the red trappings of the 'communeux', is in herself curiously suspended in the various political and sexual discourses. Down-market, but residually noble, she seems to combine both radical and anti-radical ideas of the republic, and, indeed, her task is to reconcile a red, urban metalworker on the right, with a royally red, reactionary rural labourer on the left. Beneath the figures is the slogan *Labour is Liberty*, which was to find its place over the gates of Auschwitz in the end. Leith is quite wrong to classify it as simply against the Commune: at one level it is, but otherwise it seems to try to resolve the social question. Here we will use it just to wind up, as it will be the starting point of a separate study. It can reveal a set of meanings partially within the kinds of political and social discourses that we have already touched upon. But it also inflects a number of discourses produced by elements of the working-class movements of the previous three decades – for instance a fluctuating equation of the relation of labour and liberty, that the caption cunningly inverts – and discourses on the working class, such as the catholic sociology of Le Play, and his great book on the Workers of Europe – discourses that themselves work extensively on the relation of town and country, the relation of worker and worker, worker and boss, worker and family. Further there is the question of the representation of labour at this point, the degree of its idealisation or brutalisation, the extent to which this overlaps with images that come from within labour movements. In the generality of the period the physical inclusion of groups of skilled artisans in the 1867 Universal Exhibition, doing their job like anthropological specimens, and the responses to this in the illustrated press and in the workers' own reports on the Exhibition, would lay out one aspect of the bases for analysis. It could then be seen that even if the print does make a relatively simple political

FIGURE 12 *Brigands*

statement, such as *hard work in social unity and a moderate republic are better than revolution and social division*, this statement itself only signifies in terms of the social discourses that make it up. Its effect will have been made insofar as it reproduces parts of them out of the viewers' own system of knowledge and positions within them. It is this that we mean in saying that the prints are only phonemes of social discourse.

It is curious, then, that possibly the only print that seems to contain some kind of a programmatic solution to the social question should come indubitably from the right. We could say, correctly, that only the middle and ruling classes could gain from a solution that proposes social stasis. More problematically, we can argue that political positions and positions within social discourses are not one and the same thing, and that differentials in knowledge and viewpoint produce displacement between the two. Many of these images are products of just such displacements, which in turn are constitutive of their meanings.



FIGURE 13 Souvenires de la Commune. ‘Citizens, men are rascals, mine kills me with irritation and he’s still not been hanged ...’

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Well-Formed Phrases: Some Limits of Meaning in Political Print at the End of the Second Empire

(Written with the 1984–5 miners' strike in mind)

This article is a partial sequel to 'No Particular Thing To Mean', and it also takes up some questions raised in my review of Maurice Agulhon's *Marianne into Battle*. Both of these were preoccupied with the uneven way in which political print or satire is taken up in art-historical or historical writing, and is held either within the hierarchies of meaning attributed to different art forms, or is used as illustration. The problem was to see how these uses overlap with the relationship of authorship and meaning in political print, and to indicate that how they do often confuses and inhibits a materialist social analysis of the ways in which they can produce meaning. I wished to create a distance from the cannibalistic approach of certain kinds of social history of art that eats up little signs in order to give more importance to bigger ones, and also I did not want to engage in the discussion of political print as a form of material production by way of a virtuous substitute for other kinds of appropriate research. Not that such investigation is unimportant. It is crucial to an understanding of how the social structuring of the production and consumption of visual images enters into their reading, into the amount or kinds of meaning that they are allowed to have. Otherwise I wanted to escape a hagiographical struggle over what it is that the prints illustrate as being a conflict between politically good or bad intentions. This can all be left aside now, and is mentioned only because the objectives remain viable, and current in this work. In passing, however, it is worth remarking that of all the art-historical tendencies that fetishise the genres of artistic achievement, the 'modern art and modernism' one is probably the most influential. And so, if I found that 'No Particular Thing ...' led me to think again about the value of Warburgian iconology, this was not displeasing. The point at which this touches against the methods of analysis opened up by Bakhtin's linguistics seems to me to be a more productive starting point than the vamped-up, socially structured version of the creative artist.¹ Anyway,

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1 Voloshinov 1973, when seen as a method of interrogating the social meaning of the circu-

I got no further than laying a basis for looking at a print, *Le Travail, c'est la Liberté* (see: Figure 6), and this is where we will carry on.

There, the print was seen as being not so much at the centre of a complex set of political and social discourses and representations as afloat in them, rather as its viewers themselves must have been. Now we will deflect the investigation onto another object, namely the articulation of notions of social order and social place, and see if such an exploration yields any knowledge about the position of such a print. At the same time this enables us to distract our attention from the relation of the print to other prints as an issue of any central importance, and to look at the articulation of orders of representation which are not themselves structured by traditions of visual satire, but which, nonetheless, interact with them. This starting point is obviously not a random one, since *order* was a most important focus of social and political struggles, and became an especially significant word in the short period that we are dealing with.² It was a subject of confrontation in industrial relations, political desires or military conflict alike, and it is through a contention of viewpoints that the representations of political leaders, class or work come to be formulated. If, then, the viewpoint of social order was based on the maintenance of catholic morality and capitalist hegemony, then these seem as if natural. And their inversion, or the desire for it, could be readily seen as originating from the realm of the unnatural.

In the period after the suppression of the Commune, this is characteristic of the large number of anti-Communard scatologies, whether verbal or visual.

lation of signs, both makes it possible to understand their polysemy as a specific historical question rather than an abstract one of the deferment of meaning, and that the multiplicity of meaning is a product and a site of social and class conflicts. What is interesting in the work of an art historian like Edgar Wind is the way in which the exhaustive pursuit of the possibilities that a sign has of making a meaning also leads to a notion of meaning as socially produced.

Otherwise, the plan for this article is contained in the last paragraph of 'No Particular Thing to Mean'. But I have to admit that both this article and its predecessor remain very much suggestions for how to deal with the material. I still find myself confronted with two problems. One is that of finding the means to establish a full statistical analysis of a corpus of at least 4,000 images on the lines laid out by Jean Dubois for political language in Dubois 1962. Without this, one relies on knowledge and intuition. The other is the need for more precise work on the circulation of the imagery other than through the symptomatic understanding I have gained through contemporary accounts, police reports etc. This would at least help to draw a line between their ability to address people at that moment and their very rapid adoption by collectors and historians for one purpose and another.

2 Dubois 1962. p. 359.

In a typical example, Henry Morel's *Pilori des Communeux*, the title announces the book's objective, the rendering ridiculous of the defeated victim.³ Morel is anxious to establish that the leaders of the Commune were, in their different walks of life, intellectual or artisan nonentities whose ambition to occupy a more central role in society led them out of their proper place and so, inevitably, to their fall. A far more sophisticated writer, the poet Catulle Mendès, follows the same line in his 73 *Jours de la Commune*, when he mentions Gaillard père, shoemaker and head of the Commune's barricades. It was as ridiculous, he insists, for so good a shoemaker to quit his shop for politics as it was for so great a painter as Courbet to quit his brushes. (Gaillard was a well-known cobbler, who wrote a theoretical treatise on the foot.) But Morel, a cruder and more brutal journalist, is wishfully virulent in his imagining of the consequences of having ideas above one's station. Cobbling his book together hurriedly before the fate of many Communards was known – Gaillard in fact escaped to Switzerland – he finished his chapter on him like this:

It is said that, when he was seized on the barricades and taken by the gendarmes to the camp at Satory, he wanted to make a revolutionary speech to his guards, who shut his mouth with a bayonet blow – to the stomach.⁴

The summary end of the little chapter, the summary execution, the cruelty of the fantasy, flow from the cobbler's politics, which appeal to the working-class 'clubistes' of Belleville just because they are 'without ideas, inconsequential, illogical'. But the inaccuracy of Morel's imagined vengeance tells us something about his logic too.

The preparatory notes for his book, preserved in the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, show quite clearly the speed with which they were composed, scrabbling together their imagery from an already well-worn stock of anecdotes, from a current bourgeois vocabulary of fears and hatreds. Morel's journalism is on a scale that extends, for example, to another, much more considered discussion of popular politics, Denis Poulot's *Le Sublime, ou le travailleur comme il est en 1870, et ce qu'il peut être*.⁵ Poulot, a sometime foreman made good as a capitalist, critic of the Second Empire and eventually a significant figure in the Paris of the Third Republic, classed workers according to the

3 Morel 1871. For a listing of similar material see the standard bibliography by E.W. Schulkind of the Sussex University Commune Collection, *The Paris Commune 1871*.

4 Morel 1871, p. 149.

5 Poulot 1980.

ensemble of their working habits, social life and politics. His gradations run from the cooperative, submissive, happily married, sober, money-saving good worker, to the drunken, radical, independent, uncooperative, sexually indulgent 'sublimes', and it is these last that are seen as a source of trouble in modern society. If Poulot is concerned with some kind of peaceful transformation or education of the working class, and with according a proper level of liberty and justice to them, his final chapter is a more or less hysterical call for the elimination of the entire stratum of 'sublimes'. He too shudders at the politics of the club movement in Paris, and its elaboration of revolutionary ideas – 'At the Folies-Belleville, an advocate from a fine pantomime throws himself about like a madman, and, indirectly, engages his audience in the use of arms'. And though he sees the development of mechanisation, which will make work uncomplicatedly remunerative for the worker, and of education, as giving grounds for optimism, the last page of the book builds up a rhythm of denunciation to the chorus of 'Plus de sublimes'. 'Let there be an end to wild speeches, to stupid songs and crass, immoral singers, to drunkenness and prostitution on the barrières ...', and he concludes,

To all those reformers who shout 'No more capital, no more interest, no more god, family, or property', we reply from the depth of our conscience and conviction,

NO MORE SUBLIMES!!!⁶

Need we add that, with his expressive individualism, his independent and radical political position, his long nose and supposed taste for drink, a man like Gaillard père falls into the category of the 'sublime'. The combination of descriptive elements is strong enough to last on into the writing of a more recent socialist historian like Georges Duveau.⁷

Another text, this time published about a year after the Commune, deals with the political leadership of the movement. This is a 'medical' book, and claims for itself the value of scientific objectivity – *Fragments Médico-Psychologiques, les hommes et les actes de l'insurrection de Paris devant la psychologie morbide*, by Dr J.V. Laborde.⁸ The author is not above allowing himself to use

6 Poulot 1980.

7 Duveau 1946; an important, classic account, but deeply implicated in Catholic viewpoints. See the chapter on the cabaret, p. 498.

8 Laborde 1872.

references to Morel as evidence for his 'theory' that a number of leading Communards suffered from deep inherent or inherited mental unbalance. This second aspect presents some difficulty when he is writing of political leaders from middle-class, professional backgrounds, but an unimportant aunt or younger brother can usually be found for signs of some family weakness. For us, however, the significant element of the book is its deployment of a caricatural method of representation, which is used to insist on the abnormality, perversity and unnaturalness of deviance from or opposition to the dominant systems of political and social power. Hence what makes up the normal, day-to-day routine of a policeman of the Empire or the Thiers government, becomes a symptom of mental disease in a member of the Commune. In the case of P**** (Laborde uses *** marks, but this is part of the titivation, as his subject is always obvious), by whom he means the cartoonist Pilotell, the exercise of police duties for the Commune is a sign of kleptomania, the need to search for other people's money. While for R**** (Rigault), his activities in judging others in his capacity as head of the Commune's security are seen as signs of parricidal tendencies. Laborde quotes one piece of gossip in support of this diagnosis, which he characterises as a 'profound moral and affective perversion', all the more horrifying in that 'such a son of twenty five years, decreed officially in Paris the murder of fathers of families'. Clearly the exercise of their duties by the judges and generals who imprisoned, exiled and massacred the Communards would not have led Laborde to look up their family history, though at the end of the Empire Pilotell himself had attacked its police chiefs as dangerous criminals (Figure 14). However, in the wake of the repression his method has certain advantages. If revolution is the inevitable consequence of the abnormal, and the abnormal is innate or inherited, then the disease merits the cure. The personalities that he constructs are monsters, and if their folly in some sense relieves them of the full responsibility for their actions, it also evacuates them of their political content. The unnatural desire to turn society upside down contains the seed of its own (self-) destruction.

While Laborde directs his attention to the leaders of the Commune, a series of cartoons, *Les Souvenirs de la Commune*, by Scherer, focuses on its popular base. Again, however, the procedure is to suggest that when these people stray from their proper social position they are taken over by their inborn folly or weakness as a class, and bring disaster on themselves. The coexistence of a long-standing discourse on the dangerous classes and a more specific set of responses to the working-class Paris of the 1860s makes the connections of drink, stupidity, sexual libertinage and violence easy to fit together. In Figure 15 the federal soldiers are making a 'domestic visit', and it seems that the chamber



FIGURE 14 *Pilotell, Pièces authentiques pour servir à l'histoire du Second Empire, after October 1870. At the top Pietri, the Prefect of Police in the last years of the Empire, beneath him a facsimile of a secret agent's card and four other important secret police and agents with descriptions of their jobs.*

pot they have removed from the shelf links some sort of already existing household chaos with the implied fanaticism of their search. The whole situation is out of key, so that the soldier's falling onto his colleague's bayonet is amusing, but not surprising. Amusing that is, in relation to Morel's more callous style, but part of the same distancing effect whereby the destruction of the Commune is seen as its participants' own responsibility. In another from the same series, Figure 16, guards lie drunk, while a 'catinière' offers a red dawn of socialism, which is nothing but more of the colour and fug of cheap wine. The female figure is used to make a passing play on the figure of the republic, and she, like the men, is unfit to bear ideas, or bears unfit ones. This also is part of the vocabulary on 'sublimisme' and of middle-class reactions to the club movements of the end of the Empire and the Commune.

In comparison to the Commune it became possible to reimagine the hardships of the Siege as more or less benign. At least the trappings of social unity in the face of a common enemy made it possible to represent *that* struggle sentimentally, a moment when social relations seemed to be still in some kind of proper order. One of a series of memories of the Siege uses the theme of Christian charity (Figure 17) not only to suggest the daring unconventionality of the bourgeois woman in extending her help, but the meek submission of the poor woman in receiving it. If it casually reveals the sharpening of class differences under the Siege – for, after all, it is the better fed woman who has the milk – it is really a celebration of the naturalness of this difference, and of the kind of unity that might be possible across it. But it is the poor woman who becomes the drunken, brutish harridan of the Commune, the enemy within. If she takes up arms, even in national defence, it will confirm her nature, not her bravery.

I want to pursue this suggestion of some of the ways in which verbal and visual forms of the representation of social relations share images and methods in allocating individuals a proper place in society, and pointing out the consequences that flow from deserting it. Moving back a few years once again, the ideal positioning of labour was nowhere more exhaustively attempted than in the Exposition Universelle of 1867. The government itself organised the worker delegations from each of the crafts, but since these were given the right of self-election, they turned out to be far from docile. On the contrary, they tended to be representative bodies that took up not only the task of commenting on the Exposition, but of using this commentary to elaborate their views on the social question, their demands on the rights and wrongs of labour. They insisted especially on the role of labour in the production of the goods on show. As if in contrariety, the central oval of the great concentric walks of the main exhibition hall was a most striking metonym. It was called 'l'Histoire du Travail'. That is to say, it was not a history of work and working methods, but an historical



FIGURE 15 Schérer, *Souvenirs de la Commune*, after June 1871. *A Household Visit, 'Everything has to be looked through, / what's that, / We'll never know ...'*

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collection of craft objects of the highest quality and value. The ideal product stood in for the horny hand of its maker.

The 1867 Exposition was also the first to include a special category of prizes awarded for good industrial relations. Instituted by Le Play, the exhibition's



FIGURE 16 Schérer, *Souvenirs de la Commune, after June 1871. The Defenders of the Sector.*

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director and the principal Catholic commentator on working-class *mores* of the Second Empire, they were given to the most paternalistic firms, which housed, fed and educated their workers and cared for their health.⁹ Though the

⁹ See variously, *Les Ouvriers européens*, *L'Ouvrier des deux mondes*, *L'Organisation de la famille*,

Schneiders took a first prize for their establishment at Creusot, the industrial unrest in their factories in the following years turned out to be among the main rallying points of working-class organisation prior to the fall of the Empire. But Le Play is of great importance in our argument. In a series of crucial books he elaborated a massive taxonomy of the rural and urban working classes, their social habits, religious practices and their values, and tried to produce an ideal model of the worker for an industrial, Catholic society. Believing as he did in original sin, Le Play was against any form of social progress, the very idea of which he attributed to Rousseau'sque atheism, whether it was to be found amongst 'enlightened' politicians or amongst the workers themselves. At the same time, he favoured the development of modern industry, which, in its urban form, was also a source of moral corruption. The problem was to find lasting values in the moral sphere that would allow the beneficial progress of industry, and these Le Play saw in the rural family unit. This atavistic image of hard working serenity was the very polar opposite of the dissolute relationships of the 'sublimes' who peopled Poulot's working days and nightmares. But it implied a deep gulf between the mode of picturing an ideal of work and the real processes of economic change, the creation of values that would have to be fought for on crumbling terrain. Hence the irony of the Schneiders' prize.

So, in the Exposition, at the far end of the French section of the machine gallery, a display of the 'Petits Métiers' was set up. This included crafts such as lacemaking, dress trimming, chocolate making, hat making, the manufacture of artificial flowers, jewellery, headbands and other consumer produce. Here the workers, male and female, sat and plied their craft, patiently, and with their eyes down (Figure 18). The visitors to the exhibition could see them at work and could come to the enjoyment of two illusions at least. One was the appearance of the relative independence and self-motivation of the workers. The appearance that is, because, in the case of the lacemakers, they belonged to home-based industries controlled by a single large capitalist. Nonetheless, the small unit or family unit could be seen as operative. Another illusion was the absence of industrial disease. In this display, none of the flowermakers would have torn and bleeding fingers. And lacemakers won a prize for their employer on account of their good sight. The *Exposition Illustrée* had this to say:

La Paix sociale et al. Also Brooke 1970. The new prizes for 'les ateliers de travail où règnent le bien-être, la stabilité et l'harmonie' were decreed by an Imperial law of 9 June 1866, and awarded on 1 July 1867 by the Emperor before an audience of 25,000 persons.



FIGURE 17 *Faustin, Les Femmes de Paris assiégé, n.d. (Idylls and Epics) 'A self-sacrifice, the poor woman had no milk!'*

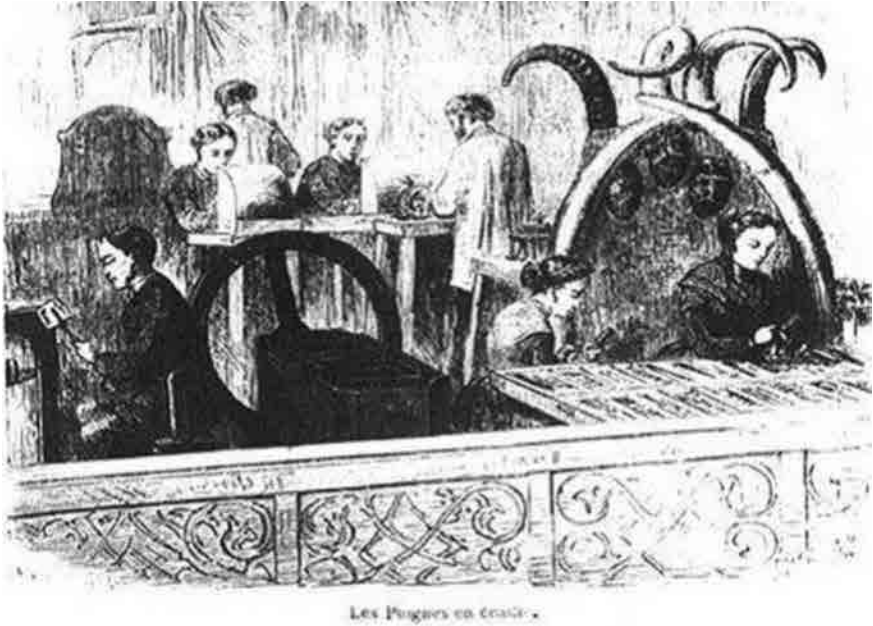


FIGURE 18 From *L'Exposition illustrée*, 1867. *Small crafts, Comb making in shell.*

The lace industry has often been reproached for compromising the sight of the women workers. So, just one simple observation. It is neither normal nor reasonable work that produces this sad result, but the excess of work born of the desire to make better money. M. Lefèvre has furnished the most conclusive proof in presenting this year to the jury of his class 4 women of 60 years old, 2 of 50 and 1 of 40, who have worked for his house since their tender childhood and who actually enjoy excellent sight.¹⁰

The article finishes with an imaginative description of a happy home of lace-makers, working in the light of green glass shades, while the father reads to them. It is more or less the opposite of what we read in the workers' own reports on such questions as seasonal labour, and the need to work excessive hours to compensate for it. But the image of the family unit, the dignity of its labour, the moralising reading, is a happy one for the bourgeoisie of the time. The household that deviates from this idea, the 'sublime' household, perhaps – if such it could be called – is evoked in a cartoon done just after the Commune (Figure 19). Alcohol, radical papers, idleness and poverty go hand in hand in a scene

¹⁰ *L'Exposition illustrée*, vol. 2, p. 363.



FIGURE 19 *From the Album-Prime de la Chronique illustrée, June 1871. 'To Drunkards'. The poem damns the drunkard for desertion of patrie and family, as he sprawls in the 'bouge'.*

of the dereliction of family duty. Disease and disaster are brought on the workers by their own ambition to quit their place. After the Commune, the glass showcase of the Exposition is succeeded by the prison bars.



FIGURE 20 Staal, Album-Prime de la Chronique illustrée, June 1871, 'Le Travail, c'est la liberté'

I have touched on a number of texts, images and social situations that offer only a suggestion of the instances in which ways of representing social order and allotting social place interact. Now, within these kinds of limits, I want to look more specifically at the operation of certain words. Figure 20 has the same

title as the image from which we took off, but it is peopled by rather different figures. Here a muse of labour, who, if she is a Liberty, is one of quite unusual whiteness – for she is indeed a statue – inspires a scene of feudal tranquility. Nonetheless the goodies that the labourers are making are the kind of thing that might have been on display in the ‘Histoire du Travail’ section of 1867. In one sense they are the workers you would have had to be able to find to put them on show there. Yet the difference between the versions of *Le Travail, c’est la liberté* is not just one of differing fantasies or realities, it can also be traced to the overlapping of different historical currencies of the words labour and liberty that do not necessarily belong to one class or viewpoint in order to have a value.

The idealising of the dignity of craft skills itself works as a mode of defence for a skilled worker faced with an increasing division of labour and the speeding up of work and is found in many working-class writings, including the reports on the 1867 Exposition. At the same time, and also because of its transformation or disappearance, it can furnish a nostalgic discourse in the work of amateur popular songwriters like the members of the singing club the ‘Caveau’.¹¹ For them such an idealisation can both stand as an image of their own craft, and insert them into a rather different tradition of less pretentiously gentlemanly working-class culture of the 1830s and 40s. Pierre Vinçard, the Saint-Simonian from a popular background, who wrote extensively on the *métiers* and crafts of Paris, produced a great history of work at the end of the 40s, in which the attribution of immense dignity and skill to the feudal workman seems to stand in for a critique of the present-day condition of the worker.¹² The parade of the dignities and achievements of the past provides an authentication for the right to a better present, and it was also possible for Vinçard to use the context of the past to review the current issues of the right to work and liberty of work. One of the workers’ reports in 1867 reuses this approach when it praises Viollet-le-Duc’s advocacy of the ogival arch because it represents an achievement of craft skill never equalled since. It is possible, then, to trace a viable movement of a historical image of labour as skilled, dignified and self-

11 See, for example, *Les Industries de la rue, par les membres du Caveau*, sung at their summer banquet on 19 June 1869. These are really concerned with street cries, but are shot through with a collector’s outlook on vanishing crafts. For a general survey see, for example, Thomas 1979.

12 Vinçard 1845–6. Also Vinçard 1863. The second of these two is also very collectorly. The first falls well outside our period, but I also want to establish some long-term elements of this representation and of its repetitions. The problematic status of dignity is nowhere better emphasised than in Rancière 1983b.

possessed across a variety of divergent political positions, and to see that this is not used to negate industrial society, nor, necessarily, to evade it, but to reflect on it and on the place of labour within it. Our second image is, then, less topical than the first in some respects, but forms part of a continuum of usages. Nonetheless, its programme is very detailed as a political discourse. While the child at the top lovingly finishes the chains that belong to history, the statue itself holds out its wreath so that, as one worker perfects it, it hovers above the head of the central figure. He is producing signs of abundance. The work itself is liberty and in doing it the workers make their own freedom. In a sense, then, in bringing together a particular view of work with a particular political conception of liberty, this chaste and cultured image caricatures or inverts such values as those of the workers' reports or the more systematic expositions of the rights and needs of skilled labour that we can see in the statutes of the Artists' Federation of the Commune. The backward look of the imagery, in the end, articulates a topical problem.

Indeed, in one sense topicality of reference might have little impact on the meaning of an image. *The National Sweeper* (Figure 21) shows a Republic dragging away the refuse of the Empire; she drives a chariot made out of the very latest street-sweeping machine shown at the Exposition in 1867 (Figure 22). Clearly, it can be argued that the image of Republicanism seen here is very much an urban one. But if the use of the machine is striking compared to the more frequent use of a woman sweeper/Republic with a broom, it does not necessarily imply a political inflection. The topicality of the first *Travail* ... is more significant in the relation of the text and the image. The second, within its series, clearly suggests that work is ideal compared to laziness or political radicalism, and the idealisation of work serves to make it desirable like the liberty you might desire. But the first does something relatively new in this period, which is to equate industrial and agricultural work as something done by an 'ouvrier'. The antithesis between them is the political one of the countryside against Paris during the Commune itself, not the nature of their work, as they both bear their tools with equivalent gestures. It is the royal red and the 'red' red that separate them, rather. In this context too, the title directs itself more towards a specifically political reading than to the ascription of a set of attributes to work. It is not uncommon to find the word liberty in front of the word labour in radical working-class discourses from 1848 onwards. The liberty to work, for example, as a protest against the workers' passbooks, the 'livret', that controlled their right to change employment free from surveillance. Or, differently, and especially in socialist language of the end of the Empire, the securing of the rights of labour can be seen as the basis of a more general régime of political liberty. Here the freedom of a class of labour and liberty become

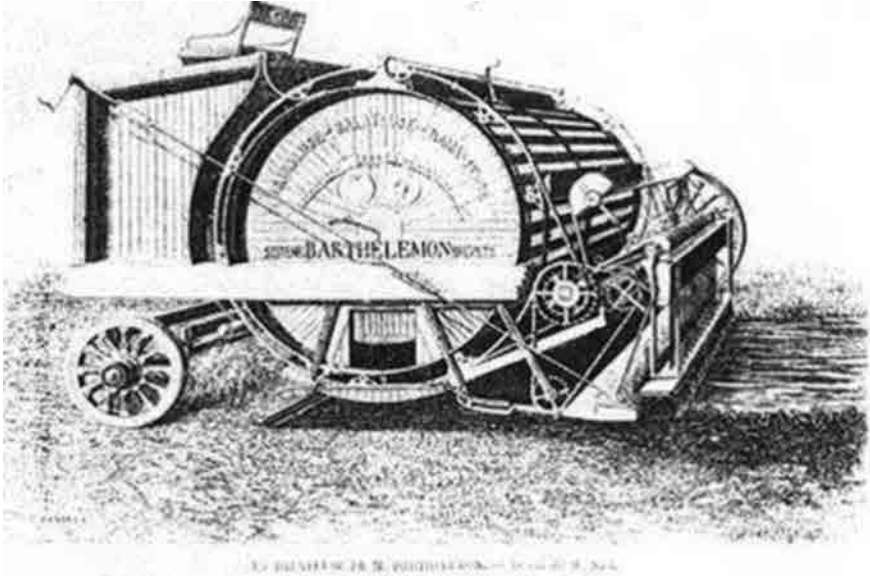


FIGURE 21 La Balayeuse nationale, after September 1870. *The Imperial family under the machine.*

identified. An extract from the *Journal officiel* of the Commune, reprinting the Manifesto of March 23, reads:

It is to liberty, to equality and to solidarity that we must demand the assurance of order on new bases, and the reorganisation of labour, which is its first condition.

It is not difficult to amplify the field of uses, and, as Dubois shows, to structure them both in terms of synchronically current positions and the survival of generations of meaning.¹³ Certainly, the notion of a generation is as useful in looking at prints as it is in analysing political language. It is as possible to find

13 Dubois 1962, p. 46; pp. 85–6. Dubois 1962, see conclusion p. 195. For Crémieux, see p. 86. Just a glance at Dubois shows both the ambitions and the awful limitations of my own project.

Concluding this piece, there is no list of people to thank. However, as for the academic politics of the day, it is usual for me to feel some sense of relief and amazement at finishing anything at all, as the government cuts bite and the crisis meetings multiply, as the mountain of bureaucratic fetishes increases. Within this context then, my very sincere thanks to my colleagues Maurice Dennis and Norman Taylor for their generous protection of academic work.



FIGURE 22 From L'Exposition illustrée, 1867. M. Bathelemon's Sweeping Machine.

radical images at the time of the Commune that use some of the signs of 1893 as it is to find 1893 as a term in radical political discourse. So, in this print we can begin to look at a relatively stable figure of a moderate Republic, combining

the symbols of peace and liberty in a form that is both classically restrained and tending to the popular – in the sense of being slightly *louche*. And this we can put in some connection with a view of the working class and what kind of republic they desire, a Republic who is, perhaps, a bit like a café singer to look at. But who, at the same time, represents a middle-class Republican desire for moderation and unity. The two male figures can be read within a fairly new economic attitude to different kinds of work, that sees them as fundamentally the same, and so, in this instance, proposes mediation of an acknowledged political difference. We can also take into account in this juxtaposition Le Play's influential proposal of country life as a social model for the future, and urban industrial life as an economic model. And, over and above these, a crucial inversion of the terms 'labour' and 'liberty' in relation to socialist discourse so the 'labour' loses its attribute as a sign of social class. Liberty, in this moderate and imprecise formulation, is a reward of work, and appears as ready made, something to be acquired or shared, not something to be constructed out of a class position or need. It would be neat, if risky, to speculate that we are getting a glimpse of a prototype of a commodity form of liberty, on line for consumption by the commodity of labour power. The labour of the workers, alienated to make a display in 1867. An image of labour made both to defend itself and to hold it in its social place. Yet this print also admits that society still needs the workers such as they are, for in representing them in a topical form, it allocates them to real work. If the bourgeoisie needed to slaughter the insurgent workers of Paris, it also required them to rebuild and save the national pride. So in 1876 a song like 'Le Forgeron de la paix' (Figure 23) could enjoy a wide success, because in one movement it placed the worker at the centre of stage, but also made him or her the bearer of the dominant discourse of peace and nationhood.

In other songs and images the worker, in contradiction to the internationalism of the Commune, is the source of nationalism and revenge, and this too deserves a dignified representation.

It could seem an exaggeration to load the *Travail ...* print with as much meaning as a major work of art, and, indeed, this is not what I am trying to do. At the same time that its author produced it, he also did others that more than match Morel's or Laborde's contributions to the massacres of the Commune. The discontinuity of style and politics between them and *Travail ...* could not be more complete, and yet, as we have been trying to show, both have their coherence within viewpoints on the working classes, languages and images deployed to locate them in the social structure. In *Travail ...* we find a particular formation that allows a relation of liberty and labour in which labour both stays in its place – that is, within the limits of moderate republicanism – and, for this reason perhaps, can be represented without resort to caricature.

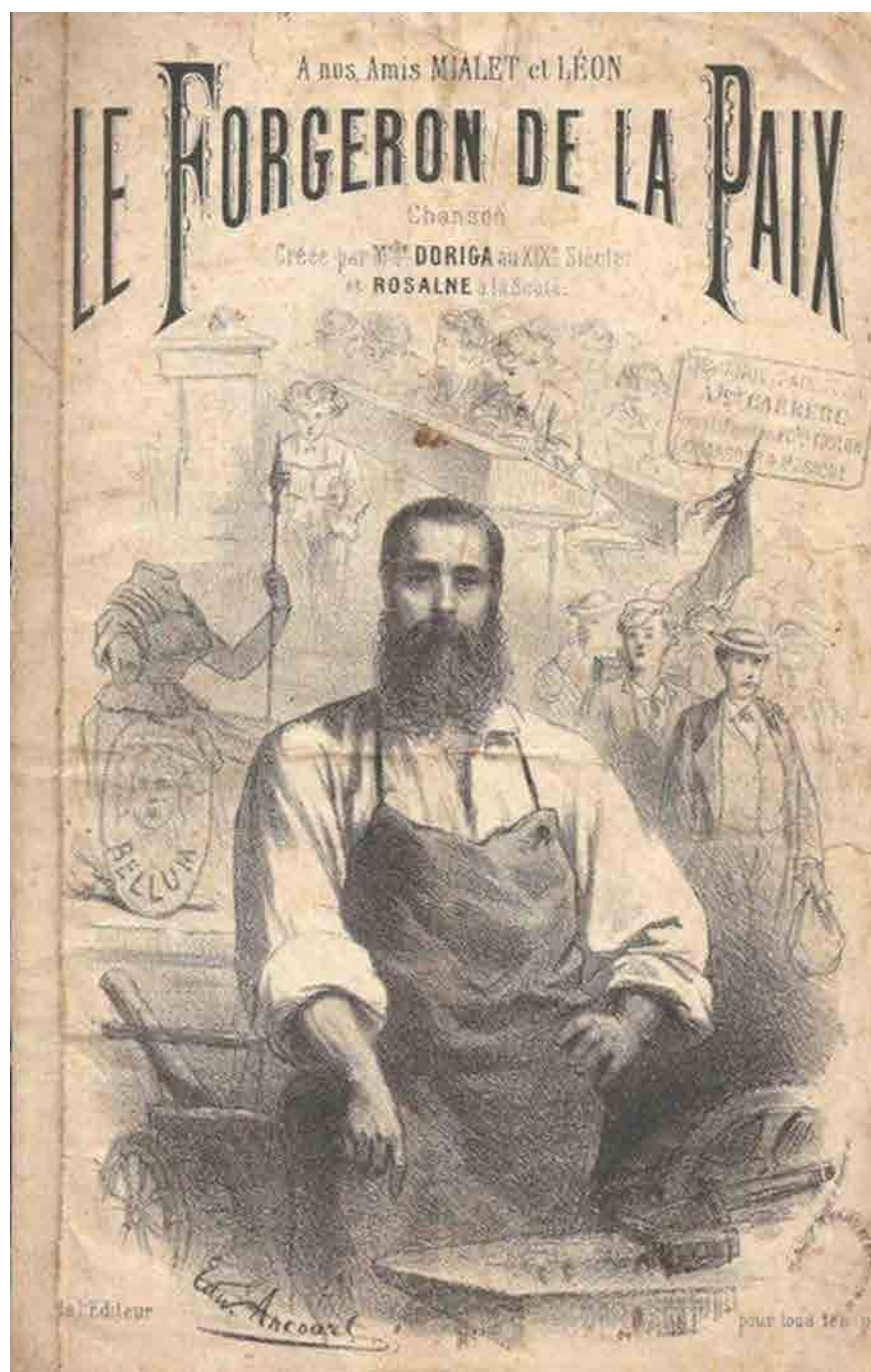


FIGURE 23 Le Forgeron de la Paix, illustrated song sheet, 1876

But the caption remains very striking, and I have not as yet found a precedent for it in political or economic books or journals of the period. It seems to occur in just these two prints, and even if it is no more than a pun made up out of the possible sets of relations of the two terms 'labour' and 'liberty' and their ambiguities, it was to prove itself to have a long-term viability as a fundamental inversion of working-class discourses. Possibly it belongs to the group of innovative verbal gestures which Dubois typifies by Crémieux's use of the word 'rural' to mean reactionary. Be that as it may, its value lies not in its intention, but in its position.

Ingres and the Academic Dictionary: An Essay on Ideology and Stupefaction in the Social Formation of the 'Artist'

Offered to Helen Rosenau,
with affection and respect*



This essay is concerned, more or less, with the relation between a particular artist – J.A.D. Ingres, and some of his biographers.¹ It will look at the way in which, in art history, a unity designated as Ingres came to be constructed out of a variety of artistic practices, and at how this unity was predicated within the

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* I worked with Helen Rosenau as a graduate student in Manchester during her last year at the university. It was through her teaching (as well as a previous and all-too-brief encounter with Edgar Wind) that I realised that art history could be a serious subject, and how it can be one. Over the intervening years, I have come to realise how much I and my generation of leftist art historians owe to hers. More than we are often willing to acknowledge, far more than I have to offer here.

1 The material in this article is not the product of any recent research – on the contrary, it has been lying fallow for over ten years. Its original motif was not any personal passion for Ingres but more my sense, as a student of art history, of strange bewilderment at what seemed to me to be the quite extraordinary vacuity of some supposedly great works of biography. In particular Delaborde's and Lapauze's biographies of Ingres (Delaborde 1870 and Lapauze 1911) forced me to think that perhaps the problem was not that little was being said, but that much was left unsaid. With this, and little other objective in mind, I set to work on researching the meaning of these works through a reading not only of their sources – Ingres's writings, paintings, etc. – but also through an investigation of their wider professional context – the archives of the Institut de France as well of those of various provincial French museums, Academic art criticism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the proceedings of the various Académies, questions of the day-to-day structure of art and architectural education and so forth. It was this that led me to a conclusion that the real site of my investigation was the special relation between the Academic Discourse in its very complex

requirements of the conception of art that this art history took as its object. It will focus upon the relation between certain kinds of verbal discourses and the interaction of these and of other kinds of cultural practices, all taken within the ensemble of their historical specificities, those various passages of economic

entirety and the specifics of the production of a school of Academic artists. At that point the work was very much affected by what had seemed to me to be a very casual reading of texts like Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* (Lévi-Strauss 1962), and finally appeared to have little to do with art history. This essay, which is a summary review of the main aspects of my work, which I now think to be far more interesting than I did in 1970, is necessarily a re-reading in the light of the more important art historical events of the 1970s – the work of Tim Clark, Carol Duncan, Linda Nochlin, Al Boime, Nicos Hadjinicolaou, etc., the dual effects of Marxism and Feminism on the discipline, and so forth. It is these that have made a re-working possible. In so far as it is possible to respect some of the older secondary sources, it was on the classic texts of Rosenthal 1914, Locquin 1912 and others that I relied the most. Rosenblum's *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art* (Rosenblum 1967) I thought then, and more so now, was little more than a dehistoricised updating of these, a regression into the worst kind of discourse on style. Since completing this piece, I have read Bryson's *Word and Image* (Bryson 1981), which I find a lamentable book, one that appears to have no notion of the *démarches* of a new kind of art history. I point to these things in order to give some idea of where the essay comes from, and also to explain this note. I have no taste to revive the entire scholarly apparatus of work done so long ago; it is therefore my intention to provide this one gloss on the text, which will explain its structure of bibliography and sources. I should add that the essay is also intended as a polemic against the solipsistic tendencies of some followers of Foucault in art history.

I have used the words *Académie* and *Academic* even when writing of the Institut of 1795, purposely, to give a not inaccurate continuity. *Ingres, sa vie, ses travaux, sa doctrine, d'après les notes manuscrites et les lettres du maître*, by the Vicomte Henri Delaborde, Membre de l'Institut et Conservateur de Département des Estampes à la Bibliothèque Impériale, was published in 1870. Its style and method of presenting an artist's qualities are consistent with Delaborde's discussions on the life of artists throughout his long career. A recueil of his funeral orations, which he gave continuously until his death in the 1890s, reveals as much.

Ingres, sa vie et son oeuvre (1780–1867) d'après les documents inédits, by Henry Lapauze, is dated 1911. Lapauze clearly carried out much deeper researches on Ingres's life than did Delaborde, as well as on the Académie des Beaux Arts and the Villa Médicis. In his *Dessins d'Ingres* he first published the ten notebooks in a summary version of their integral form. Because of the time lapse – 41 years – his work is, in some ways, an even more striking example of Academic stasis, now forming itself into the modern monograph. A short list of works based on snippets, memories, etc., could be Duval 1887; Fouquet 1930; Cogniat 1947; Longa 1942 – a crucial development in seeing Ingres as an unexpected master of the informal and the subtle. Cassou 1947, develops the thesis of Ingres as the forerunner of Modernism. Angrand 1968 is a more materially solid piece of work, but, in a sub-chapter headed 'Ingres n'est pas monsieur Ingres' manages to repeat the meaning of the *monsieur* as he tries to undo it. The criticism of these books and others is based on an extensive re-reading of the

and social formation in which they are both effects and forces. The main object of our attention is the problem of the status of the Academic theorisation of art in France in the decades after 1789, in its special conditions of fluctuating displacements – displacements within which the activities of J.A.D. Ingres reveal something of the structure of the processes at play. Our starting point is in Ingres's own lifetime, but, since what unfolded then has as yet by no means become exhausted, we will have to touch on other, more recent phenomena.

notebooks and correspondence of Ingres, especially the correspondence in the archives of the Institut, filling in the gaps and looking into the different processes of selectivity at play between their various authors. It is this approach that enables a connection to be established between biographies written at widely different periods and a more long-standing tradition of Academic meanings. The initial problem with Schlénoff's two books (Schlénoff 1956a and Schlénoff 1956b) is that it is necessary to penetrate their infinitely superior level of empirical accomplishment – which itself is very much a product of the French 'doctorat d'état.' They establish an extraordinary base for the study of an artist, but in the end they are theoretically naïve. The discussion of the relation of real/ideal in Academic Discourse is based on three levels of source. First a general reading of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century aesthetics including Goethe, Mengs and Wincklemann, as well as Caylus, du Bos, Quatremère, Ponce, Diderot, Eméric-David, etc. Second, a study of aesthetics within the Académie, its conférences, discours, etc., as published in the *Procès Verbaux* by de Montaiglon, as well as teaching reports and printed and manuscript documents accumulated in the archives of the Institut as part of the raw material of its activities. These latter include the brouillons of the Commission for the *Dictionnaire*, which were compared with the finished product, finally published in six instalments from 1858 to 1909. The actual accretion of significant types of document clarifies the multi-referentiality of the Academic Discourse, as well as its political and economic sub-texts. Additionally I studied the discussions on the role of art education in the formation of Military Engineers in the Ecole Polytechnique from c. 1795 to 1820, as well as the position of the art in the early Industrial Exhibitions from 1798. Third, the work of modern writers like Tevssède and Rensslaer Lee, as well as older classics like Fontaine 1909, were related to these other texts. Naturally this fed into a reading of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century art criticism, looked at in relation to the teaching reports of the Villa Médicis, the Classe des Beaux Arts and semi-official publications like the *Annales du Musée*. Here Crow 1978 clarified some only dimly perceived relations, and Robert Darnton's history of the *Encyclopédie*, Darnton 1979, confirmed my views on some of the general functions of dictionaries. However, this is the general context within which the analysis of Ingres's notebooks as a type of enterprise was undertaken, and I saw him partaking in the Academic response to its threatened position, and fitting himself for this task through the notebooks. As for the Voeu de Louis Treize, Duncan 1978 is an excellent and serious contribution to Ingres literature, and one of the very few recent pieces I have felt necessary to take into account. In addition to this an important text by Nicos Hadjinicolaou, on the history of the signification of Delacroix's Liberty on the Barricades has proved enormously useful (Hadjinicolaou 1979). Better than anyone I can think of, he has managed to demonstrate how a style of visual

If, however, we will be much more engaged with words than with painting, this is not inappropriate, for Ingres was a very wordy painter. In some ways, in art history, he is remembered as much for his words as for his paintings. For while it is quite normal to publish artists' diaries and letters, as well as source-snippet books on their lives, the way in which Ingres has become memorialised through written notes and records of his speech is quite exceptional. His students – Amaury-Duval, for example – his original biographer, Delaborde, and then Lapauze and a host of others in this century in recent years, and in a more subtle way, Schlénoff – all these have constructed their views of Ingres not just out of his well-known *Cahiers*, but, equally, through his *bons-mots*, casual asides and expostulations, as well as around anecdotes that relate to these and to the generality of his social behaviour. Ingres's words (and acts) enter very profusely into the representation of his life and works. Some of these biographical or, more often than not, hagiographical products have in common one outstanding quality. This is the curious ease with which their authors have been able to make sense of Ingres's words. For many of Ingres's opinions contradict each other, his *bons-mots* do not make that much sense, and his little notes are often quite inconsequential, in themselves and in their disposition in his *Cahiers*. Nor, in the end, are the biographers insensitive to this problem, and to the way in which it complicates their conception of their subject. Rather, because it is their conception of Ingres that they are enacting in their work, they can handle it well enough. That is, they make the problem vanish. They resolve it into an imaginary coherence whose construction really is their object, and it is within an ideology of such desired coherence that they and Ingres are to be located. It is this ideology, or grouping of theories, that we will

ideology, in this case romantic, can, in twists and turns, transform its political referent and usages.

What he has to say about romanticism underpins Duncan's rather different analysis of the Voeu.

In concluding I must emphasise that the relation between Ingres and the Dictionary is established through the analysis of methods of thinking and of the organisation of information and ideas. He did not take part in the Commission, nor was he the only artist to form his private notes on the model of a dictionary. Delacroix also planned a dictionary of art. It is not therefore intended to prove the relation through a series of causes and effects. The most important issue is that of the contraction of an artist in ideology, and this itself is becoming an essential element in a new art history – see, for example, Pollock 1980, or Melot 1980.

Finally I must thank Alex Potts and Maria Ivens for inviting me to lecture on Ingres, and re-awakening my interest in this old work; John Akomfrah, Carol Duncan, Hannah Mitchell and Neil McWilliam for detailed help; and A.J.H.

call the 'Academic Discourse', a discourse of which the 'Dictionary' of our title forms a fundamental part.

Delaborde and Lapauze write from the viewpoint of men who have formulated their experience of culture through the values and language of the Académie, which they speak like a mother tongue. For them, Ingres stands, above all, for the *unity* and *solidity* of their national tradition of French art – a tradition that through its unity is able to recuperate the significance of artistic practices and production from the shocks and transforming effect of historical change; or, it is able to enforce on the notion of art a single set of meanings. In reading the work of such writers it is clear, though often in only a half-voiced way, that the principal wound inflicted on their tradition, which, if it cannot be healed, must at least be masked, is the Revolution of 1789, together with those other revolutions in society and in taste that appear to them as its successors. Writing of Ingres, they do not deny his modernity, rather, they assert it as a specific confirmation of the continuous and transcendent quality of the tradition within whose parameters they hold it to exist. It is through the qualities of continuity and transcendence that contradictions, within the tradition and around it, in Ingres, and between him and the tradition, can be understood as bland and harmless. Delaborde, at the beginning of his biography of Ingres, insists that the artist's life is like a straight line, a single and unshaking process of development towards a single and unshaking goal of:

The fusion, without sacrifice of one part or the other, of truthful imitation and ideal intention.²

This Academic language is commonplace enough. But it is within such a teleology – a double teleology of the subject (Ingres) and the material that constructs him (tradition) – that multiple divergences can be made to fall into place, apparently with complete naturalness. The anecdotal Ingres, as well as the Ingres derived from a reading, say, of the correspondence of the directors of the Villa Médicis, is, in many aspects of his opinion, and of his teaching practices, full of deviations from the Academic norms. Some of these deviations, all well-known in the biographies of and memoirs on Ingres, are: his love of Gothic cathedrals; his admiration for Watteau and Rubens; his positive attitude to Dutch genre painting, as well as to Italian primitive art, as a proper object of study. Teleologically such deviations could be seen as no more, and no less than aspects of individual character, as qualities of breadth, insight and

² Delaborde 1870.

intelligence – just such qualities as the tradition must itself appear to have even if, of its very nature, it in fact denied them and suppressed them. Ingres, as the champion of the classic tradition, it was well known, lived in life-long, bitter conflict with its formal representatives, two successive secretaries of the Académie des Beaux Arts – Quatremère de Quincy and Raoul-Rochette. This too could be explained in terms of character, as the natural reaction of a fiery Southwestern temperament to the paternal institution that had nurtured, yet tormented his youthful efforts. Ingres's dispute with David falls also into this realm of aetiology. In order to mediate these contradictions, all serious enough (but of which we have listed only a few), a single historical/biographical figure was allowed to take the stage – the figure of *M. Ingres, chef d'école*. It was through this device of *M. Ingres* that the disciple of Raphael could, in the end, appear to triumph over the painter of strange nudes, and abstract genius over a day-to-day diversity of practice. Through *M. Ingres*, Ingres's contradictions not only no longer challenge the teleology, but even give it further confirmation. *M.* is what no real person could really be, an all-engrossing synthesis.

The many quaint anecdotes about Ingres function in this context. *M* is a distant and artificial concept, that they can render more endearing and more human; a story of Ingres rushing into a pâtisserie after an attractive cake, his admiration in watching a house painter at work, his life-long love of the strong and simple wines of Cahors, these incidental morsels of information that find their way into biographies are not so innocent as it at first appears. *M. Ingres* may be greater than his parts, but within the hierarchy of his physiognomy they are all essential, just as all the genres of paintings are essential to the Academic hierarchy of art itself. *M. Ingres* is almost a homology of the entire Academic notion of art, at once a hierarchy of values, and a genre-esque portrait of human reality. He, *M. Ingres*, develops from the needs of those of his contemporaries (and his own needs too) who sought a particular unity that he could be made to appear to provide, as an anodyne for their own, as well as his, displacement within the world of art. At the same time, and in the same way, he was their weapon.

Of course, art historians today do not have to share these needs. But, writing in 1956, Norman Schlénoff does, even while he takes a more sophisticated distance from Ingres than did his Academic predecessors. In his exhaustive examination of the literary sources of Ingres's major works, Schlénoff engages in a minute examination of the notebooks, but as he does so, he only perpetuates the old methods of dealing with Ingres's many contradictions. For Schlénoff sets out to distinguish Ingres's *own* thought from his *derived* thought. He bases his enterprise on the assumption that, within the palimpsest of random jottings, accretions and cross-references that make up these *Cahiers*, there is a

unitary nugget of original self – a real Ingres, that is to say, like *M. Ingres* of before. His own thought is to be distinguished from the thought that might be acquired, inherited or borrowed. Clearly, we can only go along with Schlénoff if we believe that ideas can be the property of an individual in just this way, and that there are components of thought in general that are the unique product of particular consciousness. Otherwise we must acknowledge that, to conflate a bundle of inconsequentialities into a fictional *monsieur*, or to reduce them to a single germ of true originality, is to ascribe a supernatural ability to the subject to produce himself and his own conditions, by his own effort and out of his own thought. As it happens, such thinking is characteristic of much art-historical writing, especially when it is based either in biography or the appreciation of the individual oeuvre. Under these conditions, however, many stylistic comparisons are made, sources chased, etc., it is difficult to avoid it. But if we look at Ingres's words (and paintings) in a rather different way, the very qualities that we cannot ascribe to them are those of consistency and coherence. On the contrary, in his words, and across the body of his works, inconsistency is at the heart of his activity. And, it is in the incoherence, and non-sense of his positions and productions that we can see the effects of the historical processes of which he was in part a subject. It is the peculiarly unconscious way in which he lived through the artistic contradictions of his time that made him so apt a model for his critics and admirers, who recognised themselves in his actions, and therefore constructed them as unitary. (Here we are not proposing a general theory on the incoherence of human experience but we are trying to conceptualise incoherence as an effect of quite specific discontinuities in social being).

To return to the biographical representation of Ingres, and his first substantial memorialist – Delaborde. Delaborde's volume is divided into three sections – a biographical text, a selection of quotations from Ingres's words, and a catalogue of the master's visual production. Delaborde intends that the relation between the three will enable the reader to see clearly the unity and solidity of Ingres's life and work, but in his own historical text alone it is possible to see quite profound inconsistencies within the Academic notion of art that he is dedicated to uphold. As we have already suggested, Delaborde sees Ingres's career as following a straight line, and he presents Ingres's achievement as the reconciliation, in French art history, of the Real and the Ideal. This vocabulary of the Real and the Ideal is typical of Academic Discourse, and there is no need here to do more than indicate the length and complexity of its historical development as a language. (In the history of ideas, such as it is, it is common enough to refer the ideal/real relation back to Plato, to the Renaissance conception of reality, etc., etc.) From our point of view it is the nature of its systematisation throughout the eighteenth century that is most significant:

for it became a language that was, to a large extent, closed and complete in its codes and structures, but also, to a high degree, flexible in the interchangeability of its types of significance and methods of reference. If, for instance, standards of artistic and literary excellence were infinitely interchangeable through their common origins in the founding of the Académies in the seventeenth century, then both, through their legitimation by the state, and of the state, could stand as allegorical and/or symbolic discourses on social and economic life. And so, qua discourse, they, or rather the discussion on these standards, become a form through which the totality of social relations is perceived, and its contradictions resolved at a known level of linguistic and conceptual skill. But this 'mother tongue', that, in 1870, Delaborde speaks so well, was, at one level, long since finished – even if its use was still widely located in the state institutions and social fabric of artistic life. In this sense, in his discovery of Ingres' achievement, he is writing from and for the past as a real value of his present: 'The principal honour of the master must be in reconciling these two elements (real/ideal) that, before him, were in discord in our school – if not completely divorced'.

So, for Delaborde, Ingres's work has a power to reconcile and to unite, a power that is to be seen epitomised early in his work in the *Oedipe*. The *Oedipe* blends a number of values of the Academic Discourse, which, as Delaborde uses them, carry a number of meanings, that we will crudely indicate archaeology (truth to ancient history as a social model, to the accumulation of dead facts as a method of cognition); human morality (the social psychology of the ruling class male); truth to nature (the presentation of ideology in the form of observed fact). Insofar as the *Oedipe* combines these three elements to perfection, Delaborde claims that it is greater than any painting done since, or even during, the Renaissance, in fact it can only be compared to what Greek painting must be assumed to have been. It is such a lofty conception and execution that it must be ranked along with this highest (and therefore most absent) ideal of the Academic canon. For Delaborde, then, *Oedipe*, through its particular configuration of qualities, both forestalls and negates all that art of his own time that he wishes to oppose. It abolishes the contradictions of Romanticism, Realism, and even classicism, as historically-formed artistic styles and returns art to an ideal, harmonious state. (For which the Greeks are precedents but for which there is no evidence outside the constructs of the discourse.) In short, *Oedipe* abolishes *time*, so that while Delaborde speaks of the painting as if it were a representation of historical fact – for such was the status of Greek myth – its importance for him is really constituted in the apparently complete absence of history from it. What he sees in the painting is art, and art only, a notion of art in which art cannot be the register of historical change. Here, then, is a form

of art for art's sake that seems to articulate an aristocratic ideology still reeling from the 'secousses' of 1789, of 1830, of 1848 (but which is to combine into the most generalised notions of what art is).

However, there is much more to Delaborde's text than this. For while, at the subjective level of his own declared intention, he casts his Ingres in the purest of Academic ideals, the biographical details tend to reveal a very different kind of artist. Delaborde believes that Ingres's classicism is due to his particular nature, that it is innate, or at least revealed. At the age of twelve Ingres sees, by chance (!), a copy after Raphael *or* some antique sculpture, and pursues it 'like a cat after its prey':

Right up to his last moment were the name of Raphael spoken by him or in his presence, it sufficed to arouse him to an impetuous admiration that was almost fanatical, to carry him away so suddenly, that even his violence imposed respect for a faith so invincible, so quick to manifest itself.³

In terms of the idea of talent, the manner of it showing itself, the nature from which it springs, this Ingres is more like the Courbet who 'paints pictures like an appletree bears apples', more like a romantic artist than the bronze bust to which he was once compared. As Delaborde narrates facts and anecdotes of Ingres's life, the very details of the narration hint at a world existing without and beyond its own conceptual limits. Yet Delaborde ascribes to Ingres an aesthetic first formulated in a bureau of the seventeenth-century state, worlds away from Ingres's own conditions and his described responses to them.

To a certain extent Ingres did belong to the world in which that aesthetic had its origins, and this much too is to be seen in Delaborde's text. His father was a kind of jack-of-all-artistic-tricks in Montauban, part-artist, part-artisan, part-musician, not an untypical parent for an aspiring artist of the Ancien Régime. From such a household, a student might have gone up the scale of social and professional success, to one level or another, inside the given system of patronage, or, failing that, might have gone back to something like his origins. What it was to be an artist was a relatively well-defined affair, with relatively well-marked paths of failure or success; that is, in the world in which Ingres was born, the deep French provinces of 1780. But the Paris to which Ingres went in 1797 was not part of the same social system in which he had been born, a problem that Delaborde himself recognises, but one that he sees as only having the effect of causing hardship in Ingres's life, an appropriate response, perhaps,

³ Delaborde 1870.

for an aristocrat. The revolutionary processes, that restructured the relations both within and between social classes in an endlessly subtle way, removed, among other phenomena, the original complex of social requirements of the Academic Discourse. Not that it fell into instant disuse, even during the brief period of 1793–5 when no Académie existed. The successive dominant groupings of the Convention used elements of it in their considerations and laws on the organisation of economic, political or educational systems for a new kind of French nation, and inflected its ability to relate different levels of cultural and economic needs. To a certain degree it was reworked in new conditions for instance, whereas it had once been the vehicle for the articulation of different elements of art education to various aspects of luxury production in the old École Gratuite de Dessin – just as much as had been the form of the Discours in the Académie itself – from 1794 it was the means through which the function of art in the elaboration of a new form of technical education was established in the École Centrale des Travaux Publics (the École Polytechnique to be). So, if the Academic Discourse lived on in art education, in art criticism, etc., to become once again the language of the new Institut and its new Classe des Beaux Arts, it was also relocated and transformed in new institutions, and the Institut itself was the organ of a new kind of state.

In that state, for an artist like Ingres, conditions of life were markedly different from the possible expectations of 1780. In Delaborde's account, even, we can see that, in Paris in 1797 or Rome in 1806, the conditions of market and patronage that faced him were very different from those that had confronted an artist a decade or two or three before. The relative stability of the old régime patronage was in part being replaced by an uneasy mixture of unstable state patronage and unstable private markets. In these conditions, in Rome of the early 1800s, Delaborde speaks at length of Ingres's period of 'rejection', of his dignified poverty that was, at times, not far removed from immiseration. At that time, the narration tells us, a few of the masterpieces-to-be changed hands at wretched prices – did not the *Grande Odalisque*, at the height of Ingres's success, sell for sixty times its original value? In Rome, one had to find patrons, patrons whom perhaps one did not wish to have as patrons. In Ingres's case the Duke of Alba, who asked him to do what he did not wish to do. But these hard facts, as Delaborde releases them to us, like mere ornaments on the straight line of his desired chronicle, speak not of the abstractions of the ideal life of the Academic artist; they are the routine of Romanticism and bohemia, their source is the world of Balzac, not that of Boileau, Longinus and the absent Greek idea.

In the disordered system of this society, that glints through Delaborde's text, there are some problems that help us to see why the longed-for unity of Ingres's works and words is really made up of so many styles and so many voices. For

while, as we have suggested, his potential market was a nascent free market of a bourgeois commodity type, nonetheless many of the individuals who made up that market came not from a new bourgeoisie, but from some remnants of the old aristocracy, the new Imperial aristocracy and Napoleon's court and state services, as well as from the related Italian upper classes, tourists from the upper echelons of English and other European societies, etc. – the whole traversed by the political crises of Empire and Restoration. It is just in the flux of such a market that the significance of style, period reference and storyline in art becomes unfixed, acquiring a different weight and importance now for one grouping, now for another. And it is to just such an unfixity that Ingres's work is, in part, a response. It is here that we must look to see why (and if) Ingres 'beat' the romantics to a choice of mediaeval subject matter or Renaissance historical/French national genre – as it is the confines of such a market that define the parameters of his own ability to choose. Delaborde, of course, insists that he did forestall Romanticism in just this way – but claims this precisely so that he himself can evacuate romanticism of its historical significance. Through Ingres, the individual achievement, or discovery of genius, can act as a token against the fear of actual historical complexity, invoking both the dual power of the Academic Discourse on the one hand, and of unique originality on the other. So, Ingres's market was one that typified a number of the transformations in the social, political and bureaucratic structures of France in the decade before the July revolution; a society characterised by a fluid symbiosis of new and old social forces, a society whose representation finds its most subtle form in the *Bal de Sceaux* and *César Birrotteau*. If we were to take a single painting that manifests not only the presence of these forces in Ingres's work, but also the way in which some of their significance is formalised through the exercise of his skills and choices, his first major, public success – the *Voeu de Louis Treize* – would be worth treating in detail.

This has been very adequately done by Carol Duncan in an analysis that bears out our own suppositions. To produce the work, Ingres engaged in a number of compromises, with his patrons on the one hand, and with what appeared to him as the central elements of his own theoretical beliefs on the other. Nor were these compromises ones of a casual or random nature, dictated by private whim or the demands of genius. Rather they were inscribed within the conflicting levels of Restoration politics, and the role that religious painting played in these in a public space that extended from the Salon to the church. His previous successes had been relatively minor – the allocation of his *Jesus Giving the Keys to St Peter* to the church of S. Trinità in Rome was a standard brush-off of the time, a minimal gesture rather than an accolade: it lacked a precise point of insertion into a public discourse on painting where the political conservatism

of the Restoration and the didactic conservatism of the Academic Discourse could be seen to coalesce fruitfully. And this indeed was the substance of the success of the *Vœu* in 1824. The complex demands made on Ingres both in the conditions of Imperial and Restoration Rome and by his Academic education, now bore fruit; what he had learned in Rome, he developed in the public space of Parisian and provincial French demands; through the language of Raphaelism and the subject of the *Vœu* he found his own success in a new kind of art market largely made up of an old kind of client. The mixture, which, as we have suggested, is a characteristic of France before 1830.

However, we have to return to Delaborde to be reminded that, when we say Ingres 'learned', we are not endowing him with a coherent view of his circumstances, more a facility to be spoken by them. One anecdote is of the utmost importance in Ingres's hagiography, and it is one that Delaborde makes central in his exposition of Ingres's early maturity, in his first days of intimate recognition in Rome. It concerns the unknown client who knocks on Ingres's door asking for 'a draughtsman of portraits', only to be curtly turned away with the reply that this is the home of 'a painter', a simple enough assertion. But in our view of Ingres's situation, it must be read with several meanings as the voice of an Ancien Régime 'painter', escaped from his artisanal origins to seek social and economic success (so far frustrated) through the studio of David and the Prix de Rome. This voice asserts the values of the Academic Discourse, its system of critical values and the hierarchy of genres a practice in fact very hard to reconcile with Ingres's mode of life, and his growing fame as portraitist. But through this voice another expresses his desired independence in the thrall of a fleeting market, his right to select his subject matter as an individual choice in the face of a clientèle who require him to disconsider his personal values. (His portrait drawings would appear to be produced, at least in his earlier years, at an intersection of 'social' life and potential markets.) In insisting on the supremacy and dignity of history painting Ingres also articulates a sense of frustration with the newly bourgeois art market that is an entirely characteristic component of the Romantic 'rebellion' and of the artistic bohemia of the nineteenth century. He has, in the period of his education in Paris, internalised the values of the Académie – the values of a rigid social structure – so completely that he now speaks them as if they had been freely chosen, and demands the right to practice them as artistic freedom itself. Thus two historically different discourses come together in this figure of an artist, given to us by Delaborde, who agonises on the problem of whether to give in to temptation and live well, or whether to stick to principle and hope to impose himself in the end.

Probably, what finally made Ingres such an ideal champion of the Academic Discourse was that he balanced these two options while appearing to favour

only the latter. This view of his rectitude extends beyond Delaborde (and was held by some of his opponents as well as by his fanatics). This is an extract from his obituary in the *Magasin Pittoresque* in 1867:

Certes, c'est doux et bienfaisant spectacle que celui des hommages rendus au génie à la fin triomphant; il en est toutefois plus fortifiant et plus salubre, c'est celui d'une volonté invincible traversant les plus dures épreuves, la misère, le dédain, l'obscurité, l'oubli, non sans irritation parfois ou sans abattement, mais sans faiblir, sans dévier jamais de la droite ligne qui mène vers le but idéal.

[Certainly, it's sweet and beneficent to show tributes to the genius who is triumphant at the end; it is however more fortifying and more healthy, to have an invincible determination through the hardest trials, poverty, contempt, obscurity, forgetting, not without irritation sometimes or without abattement, but without weakening, without deviating from the straight line which leads to the ideal goal.]

It then quotes the master on his natural affinity for Raphael: 'Raphael was revealed to me my impression affected my vocation and filled my life Ingres is today what the little Ingres was at twelve years'. The story and its details are the same as Delaborde. But somewhere, beneath all this, Ingres was, so as to speak, cheating. In his *Cahier 9*, the most 'personal' of his collection of notes, is a little projected life of Poussin. Here we will find that Poussin is by no means represented as he ought to have been, according to the rules, as the master of the school; rather, Ingres depicts him as an exile in Rome, a model principally for his own sense of frustrated isolation. Only in the second place is he a model for his art. (This is, incidentally, very much the core of Delacroix's study of Poussin, too).

To try to understand what this cheating was, how these multiple voices and contradictory facets really make Ingres an ideal bearer of the Academic Discourse, we will turn to the question of the Dictionary. For it is through an analysis of the dictionary as a form of knowledge that we can trace the components of Ingres's confusions. The role of the Academic Dictionary of the French Language is well known; it is, perhaps, the *locus classicus* of the organised removal of the effects of class struggle from a national means of signification. But the Academic Dictionary of Beaux Arts is less well-known, though in its means of composition and methods of concretising values, it is probably no less of interest. One of the tasks that the Institut inherited from its predecessor was, in fact, that of accumulating information and opinion on fine art, architecture,

etc., with the view to resolving the totality of its knowledge into a dictionary. Such an activity coincided with and fed from the cultural habits of members of the Académie both before its abolition and in its refounded form as well – habits of research based on the endless, empirical accretion of antiquarian knowledge, the working and reworking of histories of art or architecture, of literature or music, and on the resolution of this knowledge into a ‘recueil’. The outstanding exemplar of this form of discourse under the Ancien Régime is the Comte de Caylus, and the most important figure to bridge the period of the Revolution was Quatremère de Quincy. Their recueils, dictionaries or encyclopaedias clearly demonstrate this process, through which information is organised around the exemplification of values and in which values are represented as having the status of information. They provided forms of language, vocabularies and systems of reference around and by means of which artistic beliefs, criticism, teaching methods and so forth could be articulated. It was in the early 1800s that the Classe des Beaux Arts set up a commission to write a comprehensive *Dictionnaire des Beaux Arts*, a job that was not to be completed and published until the 1850s: and it is in the notes made during the séances of this commission that we can see something of the peculiar fixity of the Academic Discourse in the production of this all-important work. Over the long and much-disrupted period of preparation the same notes and sketches for definitions were recycled and spun out as if the work of their elaboration really was sufficient unto itself. In 1806 Quatremère had produced a plan for the word ‘gothic’, a virulent denunciation rather than a definition, rooted in the most backward-looking aesthetics of the old régime. In the early 1850s, Raoul-Rochette reread this piece to the commission, and it went into the published dictionary barely touched up, as if fifty years and a Gothic revival had not passed by. In December of 1854, Conder read a whole list of words prepared by Vincent, again nearly half a century old, and including the word ‘bataille’ and several colours – which also, it seems, could not have changed.

That such a situation should have obtained at all throws much light on the position of the Académie in French society (as the only real begetter of the ideological state apparatus, at least.) For despite the fact that, at its refoundation as the Institut, the Académie still exercised enormous power, especially over art education and the control of the Salon, it must, none the less, be understood as an institution very much displaced. The development of a new kind of art world – the dealer system and galleries, the huge increase in the number of artists and the changes in their social origins and statuses, for example – at once marginalised it in relation to the production and distribution of art, just as this same process more and more displaced the appreciation of art itself to the bourgeois home. The rise of a purely commercial architecture, that had no

recourse to Academic values in its basic methods of construction (stores, stations, warehouses, etc.), but which might call on them for the elaboration of purely decorative schema (façades), this too symptomatises the way in which the Académie was displaced from an active role in the organisation of productive forces. Indeed so important was it that this decentring should take place that successive régimes in the nineteenth century, from Louis-Philippe onwards, threatened the Académie with some measure of reform. A reform, that is, such as would weaken its hold on economic movements, or prevent it from arousing too much discontent, without, however, sapping its right to define what is art. Louis-Philippe also adopted the tactic of buying over the Académie's head, in his purchases or commissions of Delacroix, while Napoleon III took care, in permitting the Salon des Refusés, to place himself on the side of the artists, against this important organ of his state.

But this is not to say that the Académie became insignificant as a result of its marginalisation. On the contrary, it is just through this process that its basic role is re-created – its role as the guardian and sanctuary of a seemingly timeless ideology. It was precisely through marginalisation that its conservatism, stripped of effective power, but maximally endowed with social *prestige*, could be preserved and renewed as something transcendent, as a value common to *all* régimes. The Académie could thus exercise a most significant ideological role as a standard against which progress or change in the arts could be measured and assessed, and, at the same time, it was the central authority against which rebellion must needs be directed. In this sense the agenda of rebellion of the anti-academic movements of the mid-nineteenth century was as much willed by the Académie as by the participants in those movements; to argue against it was to accept, to an important degree, the limits of argument that it imposed. For instance, Courbet's dissenting taste in masters of old art – the Spanish and the Dutch – is a form of dissent well-qualified in the Academic Discourse, and structured in its discussions and teaching methods. Ingres dwells on it too in his notebooks and *bons-mots*. In relation to the dictionary of the French language, and in a different area of social and political life, an article on the family in the *Journal Officiel* of the Commune really grasped this nettle in 1871. Attempting to define what kind of family might develop in a régime of socialism, the author began his discussion with an outright rejection of the word 'famille' in the Academic dictionary; it implied, he wrote, a definition of a whole reactionary *society*, a hierarchical group with a father at its head. Changing that word and changing this world are one and the same activity. (By definition of what theory could that be labelled avant-garde?)

The dictionary was probably the ideal form of the exposition of Academic values, more ideal, probably, than the 'Discours', the polemic, the theoretical

tract or critical apology. These usually served to delineate a position within a particular aesthetic or social conflict, but could not function so comprehensively as a dictionary as an instrument of education. The form of the dictionary is able to embody values in the apparently neutral and non-partisan process of defining and arranging information, of presenting the most general knowledge; of the selection of what can be said to be accurate and useful knowledge. Thus, an artist, using the artists' dictionary, discovers the values that it embodies in his/her act of finding out, they are learned from the information itself without being disclosed as the principal content of the book. Learning them becomes an act of individual choice and of personal volition, in the artist's search for the knowledge needed to do his/her own work. More than this, even, the dictionary has qualities of absorption – it can take on new kinds of knowledge – which the Academic dictionaries sometimes did do – and line it up in the context of its already established values. Even in the heartlands of Academic Discourse in the eighteenth century, for example in the writing of a Caylus or a Ponce, we can see effects of the major changes in philosophy in their cognitive and sociological positions, an element of social determinism from Montesquieu, or of historicism from Rousseau. But these are effects that can take their place in lists and pecking orders of aesthetic merit. Indeed they even strengthen these writers' belief in the absent and invisible Greek idea, and enable them to fantasise what it might have been with greater vigour. The eventual fate of the *Encyclopédie* itself in the opportunist speculation of the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* in the 1790s, so well described by Darnton,⁴ is a fine and complex example of the way in which new knowledge can become philosophically fragmented and rendered anodyne through a process of 'dictionnairisation'. Quatremère himself, returned to France after the fall of the Montagne, wrote on Architecture for the *Méthodique*, and Watelet wrote on Art. Here we are beginning to touch on the very complicated relation between scientific and artistic forms of Academism, and their appropriate forms of dictionary: it might hold some important resolutions to our actual problem. But to follow this possibility would lead us into a different kind of study on the effects of professionalisation on the representation of artistic and scientific knowledge, whereas we can locate Ingres within the material we have already outlined.

When, early in his career, he applied himself to the composition of his ten notebooks – which range from jottings of opinion, subjects for paintings and copies to texts that he read, to simple lists of his work – the method that he adopted was essentially that of the dictionary maker. That is, in the most

4 Darnton 1979.

important of the *Cahiers*, he made himself a répertoire of proprieties, of all the kinds of things that an artist was expected to know to succeed within the parameters of the Academic Discourse. Taken in the context of all the tools of Academic art education, from the conférences of de Piles to the recueils of Caylus or the teaching methods displayed in the correspondence of the directors of the Villa Médicis, Ingres is making himself a mirror, a recreation through his own effort of the ideal image of the artist with which he is confronted. In reading his *Cahiers*, he could know what he needed to know, no more, no less. There can be little doubt that he modelled his dictionary on specific examples. For instance, Caylus had published two recueils, *Sujets tirés de l'Iliade* and *Nouveaux Sujets de peinture et de Sculpture* in 1755–7, a comprehensive selection of moments from European poetry that he considered suitable for visual representation. Caylus was quite frank about his objectives: artists, to be good artists, cannot spend too much time in educating themselves, it is the task of the well-informed amateur, like himself, to prepare a shortcut for them, one which will allow them to operate freely – innovate, even – within the confines of accepted taste. Ingres appears to accept this kind of proposition, and whether one can ‘prove’ that he read Caylus or not, there are some striking similarities between some of his choices of subject and those of the great amateur. At one level he is dependent upon this kind of recueil, and at another level he is dependent upon their method of selection in annotating his own reading, of Bitaubé’s translation of Homer, for example. But Ingres draws on many sources in the *Cahiers*, and chasing these sources can, in the end, as Schlénoff’s monumental work shows, be both as interesting and as fruitless as the pursuit of ‘influences’ for his paintings. The speculative limit on tracing the sources of Ingres’s notebooks, then, has little bearing on the essential that what Ingres quotes, the comments he writes on what he quotes, what he writes himself, his own opinions and later comments on these, all these and all the other elements of the rag-bag are hard to distinguish the one from the other in terms of relative status or significance as aspects of ‘his’ thought. He himself seems at little pains to draw a line between what is his ‘own’ and what is derived – for the entire enterprise of the notebooks is derived. It is executed on the basis of an Academic tradition, to enable him to locate himself within that very tradition from which it is derived, in terms of the entirety of his preoccupations, from questions of painterly technique to social and aesthetic correctness. The eclectic palimpsest of the notebooks, then, is Ingres’s attempt to acquire the tradition as his own, his procedure – or method, if such it can be called – is one of a simple, self-motivated *bricolage* according to a general plan already preestablished. What links the little nostrums, exemplary stories and text, subjects and opinions, is their ability to signify within the Academic Discourse. Philosophically, one

might say, the notebooks are a cross between a phatic gesture and a performative utterance. As we have already suggested, at the point when Ingres arrived in Paris the Academic Discourse was in the throes of a complex process of displacements and reworkings. One aspect of this, that Tom Crow has rightly emphasised,⁵ was an attempt to defend the Discourse, in all its institutional integrity, from the sniping attacks and dilutions that it had undergone in the closing years of the Ancien Régime and the more fundamental depredations of the Revolution. The key symptom of these attacks had been, and continued to be, after the refounding of the Institut, the rise of Salon pamphleteering. This inelegant and often scurrilous work of professional journalists, political hacks, etc., rooted in social necessities beyond the control of the Académie, effectively stripped the Discourse of its monopoly of reflection on itself and its own productions. And while as a phenomenon this could not by any means be rolled back, an essential part of work of the refounded Institut was to engage in a systematic riposte. This took the form of a general purification of the Discourse in all the areas of its traditional application. Thus, across a whole range of Academic activities after 1795 – in writings on the Salon, reports on students at the Ecole in Paris and in Rome, in funeral orations, discours in the Classe des Beaux Arts, etc., we see a violent insistence on the ‘correct’, that is, on an Academic method of work, theoretical or practical, that proceeds by ‘correction’, the assiduous attention of each individual to the processes of conformity with the mythic norms of the tradition. Correction can as well be applied to the use of words as to the execution of life drawings, and the Commission of the Dictionnaire was in the frontline of the battle. A booklet in rhyming verse entitled *La Critique des Critiques au Salon*, of 1806, and attributed to Girodet, displays this militant prudery to its full extent, and is certainly in line with the character of Girodet’s comments on students’ work in the Academic *concours*. A rather earlier visual representation of the same movement can be seen in the great Didot Racine of 1798. Lavishly illustrated by Gérard, Girodet, etc., it reinserted some of the stranger aspects of David’s works and styles (now freed from the encumbrance of *his* politics) into the discursive continua of Academicism, that system of utterances in which a couplet from Racine was worth a gesture from Poussin.

This movement to renew some kind of theoretical unity inside the Discourse took place alongside an unprecedented expansion of thematic and stylistic diversification in the visual arts. The determinants of artistic choices, as well as of the conditions of the sale and display of artworks, the constitution of

5 Crow 1978.

a public for art as well as of the body of artists, all these, and other factors, then, become more complex in themselves, and especially in relation to the Academic response to them.

We have only to look at the much-fractured evolution of the work of two exemplary artists – David and Girodet – to see how little was really fixed. The Academic strategy of the purification of the Discourse, of the reinvention of an imaginary continuity with an ideal past, was, on the one hand, a response to this complexity and, on the other, an essential element in ensuring its displacement. The relation of the Discourse even to the Academic practice of art becomes more and more tangential, a function as much of the still existing bureaucratic structures of art education as of what is actually produced within them. It is in this light that we can understand the savage attack that Ingres's teachers made on his 'envoi' of 1811, *Jupiter et Thetis*, a shattering blow for one trying as hard as he to correct; the theory could no longer support even the work of its most assiduous acolyte. The contradictoriness of this situation fragmented the lives and works of the older generation of artists, giving rise to the peculiar decay of the work of a David or a Gros (for are not artists supposed to mature, like Rembrandt or Michelangelo?) – and the eventual suicide of Gros.

In Ingres things are different. In his painting, either in a single work or in a series, his eclectic, antiquarian, almost random assemblage of stylistic and thematic materials, of portraiture, poetic genre and history, responded to the demands of the actual market in a number of its inflections. While his theorisation of art, which replicated the empirical eclecticism that lies at the heart of Academicism, also reproduced the method of articulating this material as quasi-coherent in terms of the invisible ideal Ingres's notebooks/dictionary are, in the last analysis, and his teaching, especially, are a means of straddling the space between the displaced Discourse and the modern world. It is precisely the purity that Ingres does not practise in his work that he asserts as his discourse on art. The real incoherence of his theoretical position – the fact that he so often expressed himself through expostulations is symptomatic – which is really analogous to that of his visual work, remains hidden because of its form of communication. That is, in notebooks, or in speech, he utters in dictionary form, and never through analysis. He culls his examples, his ideas, his expostulations, etc., from a tradition in which they have already acquired an appearance of unity, an appearance that relieves him, or his audience, of any necessity to see relativity in their meaning. And this is so profound that, even when an Academic exemplar – like Poussin – holds an important *affective* value for him, he still thinks that this is due to the 'correct'. For Delaborde, one might say, Ingres's great virtue lies in this that he can enact a practice that is increas-

ingly prone to polysemanticity as if it were perfectly univocal. The unity of real and ideal that Ingres represented, then, is the result of a near complete stupefaction that, in the end, did much to endow an old, aristocratic ideology with a new and central importance in bourgeois society – to its proponents as well as its opponents, as we have suggested.

At times this could make Ingres all things to everyone. In 1846 *Antioche et Stratonice* was well-received all round; it could, and did, appeal as much to the lover of the 'vignette romantique' as to the Academic archaeologist, to the lover of perverse love as the amateur of strange colour and fine technique. In a different way, but with similar import, the *Martyre de St Symphorien* had completely failed at the Salon of 1834. Léon Rosenthal, in his great work, *Du Romantisme au Réalisme*, nearly put his finger on this. Writing on the reception of the *Martyre* in 1834, Rosenthal asserts that Ingres set himself up as a 'pedantic professor', and the critics treated him like a 'schoolboy'. In one painting he tried to summon up and embody his entire knowledge of the Discourse, only to see it treated as exaggerated and grotesque by almost every artistic faction and grouping – he never showed at the Salon again. And yet, when he made his retreat to Rome, he went not like his mythologised master, Poussin, as a refugee – but as director of the Villa Médicis, as *M. Ingres, chef d'école*, charged with the most important of all tasks in the reproduction of Academic values. Why? It is true that, with the *Voeu* and the *Homère*, he had already rendered sterling service to the social and political values of restored Academicism: he was clearly the principal legatee of a generation of dead artists. But more than that – and here we go beyond Rosenthal – it was the very character of the failure of the *Martyre* that ensured his suitability for Rome. For the significance lay not in the failure of his science but in the fact that he had exercised it in quite that way at all, on such a scale, with such a National-Christian subject. Rosenthal points out that the ferocity of the dispute on the painting was unparalleled since David's *Sabines* was first put on show, it was Ingres who made such debate seem viable again. In his complete failure to please he showed that he could precipitate an efflorescence of that Discourse, the bearer of artistic truth and the foundation of artistic education; through his work the Discourse, whose traditional functions were now displaced, became the viable focus of artistic ideologies. In Ingres, then, it becomes possible for Delaborde *not* to see what is there – the multiple nature of social life – or at least to fantasise its absence, and for Delaborde, as for Ingres's enemies, like Silvestre, it is possible to see what is *not* there – a unitary Academicism, be it friend or foe.

Baudelaire saw how a lived-out contradiction can produce its own form of ignorance when he wrote of Ingres as 'quasi maladif' [The 'maladif' lies precisely in the compulsive incoherence of Ingres's work, its tacky bricolage

(*Homer, Joan of Arc*), that hangs together sometimes through the pictureframe itself, sometimes through the crafty repetition of line and pattern, more often than not through a stupefying comprehensiveness that knows no limit. The paintings are blindly criss-crossed by different ideologies of their epoch, that they hold together by referring them to a single notion of artistic value. And as they do this they play an active role in the formation of a dominant ideology – at one level by showing a possible relation between its potential elements, at another level through demonstrating the means of imagining their ideal unity. The *Grande Odalisque*, for example, even as it refers to the fashionable art of the moment in Canova and it flatters the taste of the clients for this art – the society of Italian Bonapartes – it also refers these tastes back to Titian without lacking some odour of rococo voyeurism; it also fanaticises the Academic rules on local colour – we could multiply these instances. But who is this woman, whom Kératry blamed for having one vertebra too many? Certainly she is a *femme-objet*, but not like *Miss O'Murphy* with her active sexual desire. Her essence, perhaps, lies in this fault of drawing – the extra vertebra – for she is, above all, a woman who will never need to stand up – least of all at a kitchen sink, or on her own two feet. Carol Duncan has compared her to Chicken Kiev, limp portions of dead flesh blown up with butter. This brings us somewhere near to a possible truth, and enables us to see her as a factitious woman, a woman who can eventually be bound into corsets and crinolines to adorn the living room of bourgeois man, without losing altogether some charming and essential continuity with an aristocratic past. It is this kind of confluence that Ingres's stupidity enables him to do so well.

If Baudelaire, as usual, put his finger on the trick, he did not necessarily see the relation between what was going on through Ingres and what he himself was doing with Guys and Delacroix. For, when Baudelaire writes of Guys that he 'slips the eternal out of the transitory', or when he feasts himself on the 'real' meaning of Delacroix by consuming only the perfume of the colours, from his own standpoint his strategy is analogous with that of Delaborde towards Ingres.

That is, he defines art as true art to the extent that it transcends history on the one hand, and on the other hand to the extent that it evacuates from him his sense of the present. It is precisely the atemporality of art that makes it art. If we can accept this hidden connection between the epitomes of old and new, then it becomes possible to see that, among the complex overlapping of the factors that go to make up the dominant notion of art in our epoch, then these two – the Academic Discourse and the discourse of the 'avant-garde', form a system both of convergence and of opposition. One form of their convergence can be read in academic art history of the last few decades. For instance in Rosenblum's monograph on Ingres or in his *Transformations*, Ingres is used to predict

Matisse, but in terms in which the characterology of Modernism is already given, and there to be read back into Ingres. At the same time imagery from Ingres's work is coopted into the practice of artists occupying as discrepant a position within avant-gardism as Picasso or Raysse, and transcriptions from Ingres are common enough in contemporary art schools where, amongst other models, they serve to enable young artists to discover their 'self'. Delaborde evacuates history from Ingres in order to reconstitute a tradition whose boundaries extend far beyond the world of art, precisely through giving its art as the form of its transcendence. Academic modernism of our day also evacuates history from Ingres, to discover the essential art that lies behind the historical *Monsieur*. In rescuing the essence from the moment, it finds the real art in art, the retroactive prediction of its own tradition of beliefs. Likewise, what we have had to argue here begins within the institutionalised practices of modern art and of its history.

Success Disavowed: The Schools of Design in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Britain (An Allegory)*

Couplets Without Rhyme ...

The relation between the words *art and industry*, *fine arts and industrial art*, *industry and design*, and the relations between these types of couplets constitute a special discourse on the paradise that capitalism would become if only one could reconcile the differences that they suppose. A paradise real-

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* The arguments in this article were first developed in teaching a 'design and society' special subject for historical studies students. This was at a point in the late 1970s when debates on social structure had become focused around the conflict between culturalism and structuralism – a whole bibliography of the debate could be drawn up from *History Workshop Journal*, the reviews of John Foster's *Class Struggle in the Industrial Revolution*, and so forth. Although the terms of historical debate 'hegemony vs. social control' have developed since then, the article remains in some sense a response to that particular moment. But maybe its insistence on the cognitive dimension of language in social formation has also helped to give it staying power. My ideas were also developed and discussed within the very different context of the doctoral seminars 'The Universal Exhibitions as Witnesses of Social Movements', conducted by Madeleine Rebérioux at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. Here these kinds of theoretical problems were subsidiary to the discussion of how to read the complexities of social phenomena such as the Exhibitions, and of how to register them in an expansive version of labour history. But it was from the work of Jacques Rancière, and other writers in *Les Révoltes Logiques*, that I learned that the object of my attention was not so much a relation of design and labour history, but the role of design discourses in certain middle-class *imaginaire* of labour.

In the form that it appears here, then, my article is a version of one that I wrote for *Les Révoltes Logiques* in 1984, and published in the last issue of that review in January 1985. It was written to meet the interests of French readers, and I have made some changes to insert it into a British context. As a reading of its sources, which are part secondary, part the Parliamentary Papers and Proceedings of the Manchester School, and partly archival, it is intended to be speculative and suggestive. My thanks to Jacques Rancière for his decisive editorial action on the original, and to Steve Edwards for reading this version.

I have made some attempt to take account of recent developments in this field of analysis. It is important to signal the work of Janet Wolff and John Seed, as well as of Griselda Pollock;

ised through the perfect harmonisation of production and consumption. It is one of those unending stories. For, if it took a particularly modern form in the first third of the nineteenth century, then it has undergone periods of intense reworking and renewal since: at the time of the 1925 Exhibition in Paris, for example, and during the last decade. The conviction that British industry will be reborn from a new marriage of art and industry, consummated in the bridal suite of high technology, in the shadow of the home computer and its games, the compact disc player and the whole range of articles of domestic pleasure that have escaped from the cornucopia of military research, has never been more flaunted.¹

Without doubt Fine Art courses have never found recruitment easier than in the last few years, with waiting lists longer than for those in the various fields of design. But, equally, the authorities have no doubt that the former must be sacrificed in favour of the latter. It only requires a little displacement in the language of the marketplace to forget to notice that potential students are themselves a market. Indeed, no idea could be more silly. They are a product, whose successful sale depends upon the complete identification of the market for education with that for jobs, an equation that is now to be given legal status in the form of the Polytechnics Central Funding Council. And if industrialists and design consultancies themselves often remain unconvinced of the profitability of this politic, they at least seem agreed that it has a good moral profile, that it offers a way out of economic and social subordination that is not dependent on an over-generous diffusion of the principle of 'freedom of choice'.

also Adrian Forty's *Objects of Desire*. The essays of the first group are in the process of reworking the basis on which we can approach the analysis of middle-class cultural evolution at a local level in English industrial cities. The latter work provides some astute commentary on the Parliamentary Papers, and a longer term vision of the sociability of design. Work on the sexual division of labour is also shifting the parameters of research. Peter Cunningham's important Ph.D. thesis, *The Schools of Design* (Leeds University, 1979), unhappily remains unpublished, as does Andy Freestone's MA thesis on the Worcester School (Royal College of Art, 1985), which greatly adds to our knowledge through its account of the situation in the Worcester Porcelain industries. It would appear there that the industrialists did indeed learn their attitudes to culture in the way I am trying to argue.

- 1 The accelerating closures of Fine Art courses and the exponential growth of the Heritage Industries give doleful weight to the opening paragraphs, and the work of Patrick Wright and Robert Hewison need to be acknowledged. It must be argued that the cutting down of Fine Art at places like the RCA, seen in this historical perspective, is a political act, a negation of a 'right to art', whatever its economic justifications. But that some eminent directors of our system of art and design education really seem to believe in these is the measure of the intellectual stature that goes with the calculation of short-term profit.

This should not be seen as a simple case of trickery. The utopian dream of a wise and cultivated workforce enters profoundly into the cultural make up of the industrial managers and entrepreneurial classes. Nor should it be something to reject outright when the means of confronting or escaping subordination are already diverse and ill-defined in their outcome. On the contrary, the gap between the wish-to-say and the power-to-say of the vocabulary of *art and industry* leaves space for the imagination. It is a confusion that can produce ideas. Amongst other possibilities it helps to situate artistic culture as a source of legitimate desire, as a form of leisure or national wellbeing in a way that frustrates its representation as a simple utility. We will look at how, at the level of multiple and diverse practices, the irreconcilability of our terms and couplets implicitly confirms their differences as the operative content of the discourse on *art and industry*: and at how this discourse provides for the sublimation of several social contradictions.²

2 One major point that I would now like to emphasise is only suggested in the opening paragraph – that the middle-class discourses on art and design constitute a fully fledged capitalist utopianism, a utopian dream that can be traced from the Parliamentary Papers (PPs) to the Catalogues of the Exhibitions and to the *Grammar of Ornament*, for example. The contradictory and experimental propositions on art, industry, cost and profit, social place and space that we find in such texts, as well as in the PPs on the National Gallery, or Lady Eastlake, seem to be trying to imagine and to produce a kind of field of force that will hold the anarchistic processes of production and consumption in an ideal order. The cost of art here will balance out with the cost of education there, as taste and social order interweave themselves through the profitability of skill and sales, and knowledge of and contentment with one's place in the social structure. What the Coles of the country were aiming for was very much the same kind of contented stabilities as Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice*, though within the imperatives of deskilled and mechanised production.

Free-trade capitalism produced a common *habitus* of language and thinking for its critics, one that metonymised the commodity in the form of the luxury object for the whole of industrial society, and that left the commodity status of the object at the centre of different and conflicting political and social desires. One has only to recall the role of luxury objects in the life and work of William Morris, and in particular the play of their de-fetishisation in *News from Nowhere*. Morris owes quite a lot to the fact that those discussions of 1835–6 took place over a relatively outmoded and undercapitalised sector of production that remained in competition with the realities and myths of the production of French luxury. The integrity of luxury consumption was inscribed at the very centre of the processes of coming to know, to organise, and to oppose the industrial system. Here, clearly, my argument takes issue with the theses of Wiener 1981.

Design Histories ... (Couplets without Reason)

This relatively recent reemphasis of the preeminence of design in national wellbeing has been accompanied, albeit in the longer term, by the accelerated professionalisation of design history – a process of which journals like the *Journal of Design History* and *Design Issues* are potent representations. For the wider public this process takes place under the patronage of the store, such as Habitat, with its own staff of both designers and historians, and it accompanies the day-to-day processes of current consumption. The French catalogue of Habitat, *Préférences*, the luxury range of goodies that extends from the Werkstätte to Alessi and Graves, solemnly inscribes the objects and their prices in the history of eternal values and lasting qualities, assuring the purchasers of their own possession of those classics that are ‘past, or passing or to come’. In *Préférences* design history elaborates that fairy tale of the beautiful object of days gone by, that foretells today’s market, and feeds its rate of profit with a range of styles that appear to transcend mere fashion. Or the public is brought to enjoy design in the more spectacular form of the industrial museum, among the old mines now half reconstructed as picturesque ruins. The tourists’ ears are tickled by the sounds of another age, but safely distanced from their historical working conditions and their industrial pathologies. In Styal woods, the water that turned the deafening looms restores the history of industry to the nature of the nation, the industrial revolution to a nostalgic chauvinism.

Although they overlap with this spectacle, the newly developing skills of higher education propose a more complex, or at least more detailed social history as the circumstance of design activity: something able to replace the worn sagas of those geniuses who were the movers of the ever-rising curve of technological achievement. For it is now very clear that however great their scholarship, Pevsner and Giedion were entranced by the Universal Exhibitions and their parades of reified progress, and took their methods of exposition at face value, as a way of doing history. It’s important to get this right if we are to deal with the profoundly anti-historical critiques of Giedion and Pevsner’s ‘modernism’, of the kind made by a Watkin or a Stamp.³

It is not only a reactionary scatology to represent Pevsner as some kind of a Bolshevik-Jewish plot, but a refusal or inability to see that such writings are very much one of the representations of a form of mid-nineteenth-century

3 Giedion 1969; for Pevsner, his London Guides are as good as anything in looking at his system of values. Watkin 1977 refers, quite gratuitously and, as it happens, inaccurately, to Pevsner as Jewish. For a modernised version of ‘great movers’ history, in which men are replaced by discourses, see Tafuri 1978.

economic thought, now vaunted as a model of political wisdom. A classic case of taking symptoms for causes, and an approach to design history that achieves its highest institutional form in the speeches of the Prince of Wales and its most lucrative in the architecture of Quinlan Terry.

However it is just here where it is easiest to trip up. Either we have to follow the direction suggested by a set of historical methods that diffuse the notion of design into its history as one of different specificities, articulating different uses and representations,⁴ or we come up against the limits of a sociological method that only attempts to reassign context and relative significance to objects whose place is already decided in the catalogue *Préférences*, in Pevsner or in Watkin; or simply find solace in the detailed investigation of historical production processes and design methods. The attribution of this or that text, object, design school, et al., to this or that social interest or elaboration of a labour process, can just come down to writing better captions. So the confused and contradictory processes of the cognition of cultural values – of which design is one complex – lived out across the organisation of production and in the complicated conflicts and relations within, and between, classes is disarticulated by such empiricism. Everything that doesn't seem to have a literal, unitary, or narrative significance is, as if it could not therefore be seen as a symptom of its own historical constitution, evacuated to the margins of discourse. If a new history of design searches for the true relation of art and industry – rather than for the truths of their supposed relation – then, ultimately, the sales catalogue, the Boiler House and the Conran-museum-to-be will wolf it up.

That old and pioneering standby of design history, the Open University reader *Industrialisation and Culture*, at one point offers a model example of this problem. This arises quite directly from the way in which recuperation of forgotten or neglected texts leads on to letting them speak for themselves. Thus we find the reproduction of two critical texts from the *Art Journal* of 1846, presented with the comment that Victorian taste has been too easily caricatured, and that critics of current consumption and design were capable of fine or reflective discriminations.⁵ Fair enough: and anyway modern culture industries and markets have made quite sure, through the retroactive validation of soaring prices and industrial museums, that the Victorians could have done no wrong. But what do these texts mean? What are 'mistakes in candlesticks', within what moral and aesthetic linguistics can the two words be held together,

4 See, for example, the important articles of Teymur 1981, and Fry 1981; Haus 1977; Forty 1986. More recently, see the beginnings of a project in Nesbit 1986.

5 Harvie 1970, pp. 269–70.

and how is usefulness floated across their relation? How can they be certain that one object has more sure taste than another; whose taste – of which manufacturer or which market? The texts are really as complicated as the objects that they take to task, as ornate and decked out – in assumed values and senses. Yet their incoherence is scarcely contained within their lurching certainty of making sense. What at least are the bases for the illusion of coherence in such a pretentious discourse?

Evidently it can be argued that a fairly complete discourse on luxury and the values of consumption and production goes back to the middle of the eighteenth century and beyond, or that it can be traced in an institutional setting through the history of the Society of Arts. It would be wrong to ignore this, but just as much mistaken to believe that a discourse of this kind, however sure-footed it might be in its system of linkages and couplings, however stable its semantic field might appear, can really be seen as continuous. Certain elements can be seen as having the status of mythemes, of ideological unities that project a relatively stable image onto changing economic and social processes – in England and France the words 'France' and 'England' respectively have this kind of function. One can discern shifts in their importance that correspond to different moments of international competition – in the eighteenth century at the times of the wars in India and North America, the relations between the language of luxury production and the articulation of nation seem especially significant. And in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, in particular after 1826, the year in which French goods were again allowed to enter British markets, the myth of Parisian luxury entered powerfully into both the kinds of choices made by consumers and the ways in which British manufacturers began to take cognisance of a new stage of competition.

It is here then that the nature of the correspondence of language, economy and social relations becomes crucial. For it turns out to largely delineate the parameters for the discussions of the Parliamentary Commissions on Art and Design of 1835–6, which ended up with the founding of the national system of art education in 1836. The 'mistakes in candlesticks' is only an infinitesimal unit in a language that came to predominance in the structures of art education as well as in the organisation and exhibition of industrial culture by the middle of the nineteenth century. Articulating primarily the sector of luxury production, it became a means of seizing the ensemble of industrial society in the form of a viable unity, of an imaginary perfection.⁶

6 I need here also to underline the importance of perceiving a radical break in the meaning of discourses on luxury between the period of the foundation of the Society of Arts and the

An Ideal *Non Sequitur* ...

When it was founded in 1836, as a result of a recommendation of the Parliamentary Commission, the Central School of Design had very clear objectives. It was going to teach the principles of ornamental art to the artisans of London.⁷ It was followed by a women's school, and then by a branch in Spitalfields, which was just as well, as it was the silk manufacturers who had shown some real interest in the idea. By 1849, 21 schools in all had been founded willy-nilly throughout the industrial centres of Britain. Their success and status was uneven, unpredictable, and problematic; in places they doubled up the educational programmes already being elaborated in the Mechanics' Institutes,⁸

economy of post-Napoleonic Britain. Arguments can be made for long-standing continuities in the vocabulary on luxuries and their international context – such as found their equivalent in France in the discussions on the *École Gratuite du Dessin*. However, this is to underestimate the role of displacement and slippage itself in the production of meaning. If elements of the vocabulary remained intact, as well as the methods of ordering them, their 'signifieds' and their 'referents' were in quite a specific historic process of displacement as the economy and social relations developed in the Industrial Revolution – however slowly or unevenly that might have been in some of these sectors. See Samuel 1977; Karl Marx, 'Machinery and Large-Scale Industry' in *Capital*, Vol. 1, ch. 15; also Stedman-Jones 1981.

This is one of the reasons why it is necessary to insist on the cognitive or acquisitive nature of middle-class and industrial cultural values, a coming to know and place them, and live them out, and to get them lived out. The foundation of the Schools of Design suggest that the industrial aesthetic was to be thoroughly utilitarian and 'interested' – but that the unconscious imperatives of the division of labour and social order precipitated a view of art that, to play its interested role at all, had to be represented as the very category of disinterest. And in so far as good design tended to art and escaped the vulgar fickleness and overt class divisions of the market, then it also took on a Kantian tinge. So leaving a space for the identification of mass production with kitsch in the future of popular consumerism – an interesting discussion before the Select Committee in 1835 raised the popular diffusion of India handkerchiefs, and their fall in price from 7s. or 10s. to a few pence, as a loss of social status.

7 Parliamentary sources are from Volumes 1, 3, and 4 of *Industrial Revolution, Design* in the Irish University Press edition. Vol. 1: *Reports of the Select Committees on Arts and Manufactures, minutes of evidence and appendices, 1835–36*; Vol. 3: *Select Committee and Other Reports on the School of Design and Foreign Schools of Design, 1840–49*; Vol. 4: *Reports and Papers relating to the Head and Branch Schools of Design, together with the First Report of the Department of Practical Art, 1850–53*. (This last named report is of capital importance.) Summary indications of source will henceforth be made in the text. For a general approach to this kind of source, see Johnson 1973.

8 Tylecote 1957 remains the best summary. There are a number of contemporary pamphlets on

but they represented the only systematic response to the terms of the Parliamentary enquiry, 'The diffusion of a knowledge of the arts and the principles of design amongst the manufacturing population'. As such, they became a unique link between the newly emerging dominant classes of the reformed Parliament and their social bases in the provinces, and gave rise to the need for a new civil service – one that Cole was to organise and use. Setting them up changed the shape of the state, incidentally confronting the newly powerful groupings with a germinal contradiction between the need for the state and the ideology of free trade.⁹

Given the composition of the Select Committee, this should occasion no surprise. Its forty-nine members included a fair cross-section of the new types of MP, as well as men whose interests in social reform, education, and the stability of the body politic were thoroughly synoptic – men such as Robert Peel and Lord John Russell. In this period of Owenism and Owenite unionism, on the eve of the Chartist movement, the problem of education, of what should be taught to whom, and by whom, was well-exercised.¹⁰ It had been fought over in the Mechanics' Institutes, for example in London and Manchester from 1825 onwards, and their exhibitions and educational programmes forestalled later developments, even if they were now institutionally cold-shouldered. The loading of questions in the Select Committee, the preparation of replies, the weighting of the value of one kind of response rather than another, suggests a fairly well-established set of interests, but worked out in a new form and in front of a new public. (The proceedings were well reported in the press, e.g. the *Mechanics Magazine*.)

But in 1849 the reports of the Select Committee were more than ambivalent. On the one hand there was much cause for congratulation. No less than 16,000 men and women had been recruited in the schools over the preceding 13 years. An astonishing number, given the uneasy position of the schools between private and state patronage, and their lack of any precise mechanism for recruitment. But, if the figure pleased, the results seemed to be open to question. Indeed it was not clear that the schools had done *anything* of benefit for industry in general or, above all, for the luxury industries. The response of the Coles, the Redgraves, and the Wornums to the 1851 Exhibition insisted

the Lyceums, etc. An important document is *Addresses Delivered to the Manchester Mechanics' Institution by Sir Benjamin Heywood, Bart., F.R.S.*, London, 1843.

9 The annual reports of the Manchester School are replete with self-accusations of inadequacy for requiring a government subsidy. Discussions on the Civil Service and state have developed out of the hegemony debate, e.g. Corrigan 1980.

10 For general questions of education and social order, see Simon 1960, and Johnson 1979.

on failure, and played a role in affirming Cole's politic in the development and control of the programmes of the Schools. On the face of it, there was no reason why Britain should not triumph in the festival of 'peaceful competition', for it showed the most materials, dominated the juries, won the majority of prizes and drowned its population with spectacular representations of social unity and progress. The criticisms of the Exhibition made by Cole and his friends were those of a group who had formulated a set of ideas and an institutional framework for the organization of the *art and industry* couplets, but who then found themselves left high-and-dry by the very successful unfolding of those economic processes that their efforts were aimed to favour – the expansion of an urban, consumer market. The gamut of objects produced to feed these markets and the investment plans and family fortunes of the manufacturers escaped, *en masse*, from the defining norms of the principles of art and design.

In his postface to the *Art Journal* catalogue for the Exhibition Wornum wrote:

It is evident that taste must be the paramount agent in all competition involving ornamental design where the means or methods of production are equally advanced; but where this is not the case, the chances are still greatly in favour of taste over mere mechanical facility, provided low price be not the primary object.¹¹

On the whole, the Exhibition offers nothing new, nothing but old styles and details: 'Ornament is essentially the province of the eye: it is beautiful appearances that we require, not recondite ideas in works of ornamental art'. And, a few paragraphs later, Wornum goes on to say:

In general hardware – especially in grates – England has no competitors, and the Exhibition seems to indicate more unusual efforts in this manufacture than in any other; some of the specimens ... indicate a great advance in the appreciation of Taste, and are certain evidence of its soon very materially influencing the more ordinary classes of grates in common demand.¹²

¹¹ 'The Great Exhibition of 1851', *Art Journal Catalogue*, R.N. Wornum, 'The Exhibition as an Essay in Taste'.

¹² Ibid.

Such texts suggest similar processes of thought to those at play in the 'mistaken candlesticks'. While Wornum expresses more or less consciously both the motivations and contradictions of the movement of which he was one of the principal teachers, his preoccupations really escape through the extraordinary linguistic slippages in his text. The words 'competition', 'taste', 'price', weave together a manageable coherence between the different discourses within which they have acquired their meanings. Discourses on national and international competition, on the costs of production, and the rate of profit; on the relation between production and the market, and that between the taste of the consumer and the taste of the producer, and on the means of inserting a form of art education into this complicated equation. Further, these words have a history in discussions on the relation of worker and boss, and on the place of education in the organisation of the labour process and the workforce, from an individual factory to the economy in general. At each point, from each point of view, they have a different weight, a variable set of possible connotations. And so this continuous slippage between the words and their meanings that we find in Wornum, and which characterises the language of his group, serves to link their most precise and most general senses within unitary utterances. Utterances whose unity handles the irreconcilability of diverse signifieds and referents by arranging them a meeting point.

In the questions and answers of 1835–6 we can see the modes of irreconcilability between and within different social groupings and sectors of manufacturing industry: the desire to see the artisan well-educated in a school of which half the costs were paid out of the pockets of local manufacturers – the John Cobdens of the industrial world – cut across the need to lower production costs and raise the rate of profit. How seriously it came into conflict with the rate of profit depended upon the structure of local industry, the degree of hand-based work in its luxury manufacture, the weight of enlightened, educational interests in the local power groups, the size and age and type of capital and investment, and their consequent social relations, an ability to make use of the copyright laws or a fear of falling victim to them, the strength of relations with Parliament and with nascent professional groupings ... These were some of the factors that made up the possible articulations of the *art and industry* couplets. In his Supplementary Report on the *Reports of the Juries* in 1851, Redgrave vented one of these interests with a passion that shows both the ambition and the insecurity of the art professionals in face of the manufacturers' evident indifference. Dwelling both on the role of artists in ensuring the continuity of design from the Doric to the present, he idealised the continental system of education:

The best painters, sculptors, and designers, as well as men of the most scientific acquirements in botany, mineralogy and chemistry are among the professors ... In such establishments a band of skilled workmen must of necessity be trained to the ultimate benefit of the private manufacturers.¹³

It took more than a powerful optative to hold together so many momenta! And in the local design schools, people slept through Wornum's lectures when he was sent out to give them an example.

Really Useless Knowledge ...

In 1845, 141 students were inscribed on the books of the Manchester School of Design; at least according to the Annual Report, for the figures centralised for the Select Committee in 1848–9 are rather different.¹⁴ The average attendance was 43 in the morning and 50 in the evening, figures that put Manchester to shame when compared with schools in the Pottery towns or in Leeds. After 1845 the figures fell and the Committee noted that 'the school seemed almost completely useless for the classes for whom it was thought to have been the most advantageous ...' The Committee's report reproached the directors of the Manchester School for disorder in the classes and lack of interest in the courses. It blamed the council, who in their status as businessmen had over 400 workers in their employ, but of these sent only six to the School. The professor seemed incompetent in everything; the labouring classes lived too far from the school to find the time to get to it – nor could they afford the cost – two good reasons that appear upside down in the employers' refusal either to lose the working time or the money in enabling the workers to go. And so there it was: the School opened in the home town of free trade, where printed calico still counted for something, had nothing to contribute to the local economy. The manufacturers appeared reluctant to pay for qualified designers, and the workers didn't seem to want to learn to draw. Cobden's subscription was as modest as one might expect, under the circumstances.

Not that Manchester was not a centre for 'popular' education. The Mechanics' Institute, founded with the backing of the Heywoods in 1825, was flourishing, and though since the 1830s it had been frequented by shop assistants and *petits-bourgeois* rather than workmen, the Select Committee noted that its art

¹³ Redgrave, *Supplementary Report*, pp. 710–11.

¹⁴ Manchester School of Design, *Report on the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting*, 1845, and other years hereafter. Select Committee of 1849, *PP*, Vol. 3, for this and following quotations.

courses went very well; and that its students wanted to go on to the School of Design where, in principle, the courses ought to have been more rigorous. But these students, incidentally, were women hoping to get qualified as teachers for suburban schools. This perception crops up all over the place in the *Reports for 1840–49*, even in the towns where the Schools were the most successful. In York the Committee was quite frank about the fact of the ‘old and well-known difficulty, that women from a higher social rank than those for whom the courses were destined, wanted to attend them – above all to acquire some accomplishments’. And Henry Cole, by now the real overlord of the system, found himself having to complain at the excessive success of classes in wood engraving, everywhere overwhelmed by women. It was not in itself a bad thing, he opined, that women should engrave on wood: but it was not within the remit of the Schools so to permit them. Mrs M'Ian, the head of the women's section at Somerset House, had to ask for a more spacious suite of rooms ... If it had always been the intention to instruct male and female artisans on the same principles, these women seemed to be after an education that was quite dissonant with the objectives of the Schools and the imagined needs of the ‘private manufacturers’.

Which brings us back to Manchester in 1845, and to the 141 unfortunate students. Roughly speaking, and including apprentices, or ‘boys intended for’ one or another trade, they break down into 31 categories. The largest was draughtsmen for calico printers (25) and their apprentices (13), wood engravers (11), then copper engravers (9), housepainters (8), architects (8), and a veritable hotch-potch of others. It's not then difficult to imagine the problems of developing either a system of specialised courses that was able to cover all the demands made upon them, or a unified course that could match up to almost any eventuality. If each of the 31 categories was to have its own course, then there would have to be an extraordinary expansion of resources – inconceivable given the already narrow financial base, and the ambition of the management to rid itself of the shame of state subsidy at the earliest possible date. And anyway, at what precise point in the process of production was the worker to apply the science acquired in the School? One could teach the minimum; that is to say, all the pupils would learn to draw outlines from the flat, and then perhaps hatching – from the flat, or even from a relief, and then ... colour?

This was to be Cole's solution in his evidence before the Select Committees and in his reports. He insisted that every type of manufacture influenced the nature of design, and that no principle of design could be taught that was not understood in its most specific application. But what if his advice had been followed? The division of labour lay at the heart of the success of British industry – a point which had not gone unnoticed by makers of plain calico back in 1835. While it remained slow to develop in certain forms of

luxury production – furniture is an obvious case – it was fast enough in others. House decoration had been transformed since the beginning of the century, another point not lost to the architects who submitted evidence in 1835. The 31 categories of 1845 were fated to become 50 in the future, and chasing their expansion would have been both futile and fatal as a policy – a point that escaped Cole, although he nonetheless responded to it. In 1847 John Gregan, the head of the Manchester School, put forward his own solution. In his annual address he argued that instead of pursuing the greatest specificity, the School should now go for the most generality in its programmes. He insisted that:

Manual dexterity, so easily acquired, will profit him (the young artisan) little; instead of making the vain attempt at once to teach him to *design* for manufacture (that particular and impossible kind of tuition so often asked for) give him first principles – those principles that are the same in the highest as in the humblest art: keep continually before him the purest and best examples of every kind, until he is so familiarised with the greatest efforts of human genius that he cannot tolerate mediocrity; give him a cultivated mind, a hand of unerring fidelity, at once to give form and expression to his conceptions and he will then (if he has any imagination at all) produce designs for himself in any department of art to which he may choose to turn his attention.¹⁵

This was not a new argument – it occurs through all the comparisons of Britain and France in the discussions of 1835, and those of the *Parliamentary Papers on the National Gallery* are partly structured round it. But here it is thrown back at Cole and his group and, at the same time, the whole direction of the courses seems to be shifted to turning out the occasional professional designer. For what boy intended for some finishing process is going to refuse mediocrity, cultivate his hand and his mind, and *choose* any department of art? Clearly not more than one or two amongst the 109 aged between 12 and 20 years to be found in Manchester in 1845. Gregan counts on the hope that the wider the net of education is cast, the better the chance that it will catch *something*. Indeed, in 1845 the School had already organised a trip to London to see the Raphael Cartoons, and in 1851 the head teacher remarked that Raphael, too, had been the product of an education, from which he drew the conclusion that even a ‘dull boy’ could be taught to design. Here a delicate, fine thread of hierarchy binds art, design, Raphael and ‘dull boys’ into some kind of a proper order.

15 Manchester School of Design, *Report ...*, 1847.

The result of making such a case, however, was that just as the managers of the system were proclaiming themselves uncompromisingly against any non-specific or non-useful lessons, the local experience of the impossibility of such a policy led to a push in the opposite direction. In effect the tendency so marked amongst the women – to pursue a different kind of cultural objective – found its expression in the milieu of the artisans' classes as well: and this as a fall-back position, rather than through a positive intention.¹⁶ But it must also be clear that, in proposing Raphael as a model for the artisans and sundry 'dull boys', a man like Gregan was not inviting them to follow him too hopefully. Rather, he was pulling his charges into the recently established cultural activities of museum visiting, focused around the development of the National Gallery and the British Museum, and fraught with contentious debates such as that on Sunday opening – which raised the thorny contradiction of the relative merits of education and religious observance.

Here again, the diverse policies of the Schools echoed the debates of the hearings of 1835, and the more general issues of popular education. In particular, debate evolved around the means of organising exhibitions for artisans and the selection of an appropriate body of materials with which to nourish their gaze. The Mechanics' Institutes had pioneered the exposure of working people both to works of fine art and to the finest productions of craft and artisanal work, together with machines and tools, and their views had been felt in 1835 through the depositions of Charles Toplis.¹⁷ But if these discussions reveal an uncertainty on the part of middle-class groupings as to what to show, this was not simply because they did not know quite what was best for the artisans as such, but because for them, too, the acquisition of a museum culture was a recent phenomenon. They were thus themselves prey to the opinions and cultural power of a more assured and older stratum of the middle class, such as the Heywoods in Manchester. These had long viewed the Mechanics' Institutes as the site of cultural, moral, and political activity and, if they viewed the Schools of Design as a potential extension of this field, they were not sorry to see their narrow practicality fall into desuetude.

The Heywoods had used the Manchester Mechanics' Institute, and then the suburban Lyceums, as a base to intervene against an independent working-

16 In the *PP*, Vol. 3, 'Fourth Report for the Year 1844–45', it was noted that the lack of encouragement on the part of employers pushed the artisans to art rather than design. And in the 'Reports of the Head and Branch Schools, 1850–51' (*PP*, Vol. 4), an improvement was welcomed in the situation in Manchester, except that there were still some 'persons who are designated *artists*' to be found there.

17 See Kusamitsu 1979.

class educational movement, as a *cordon sanitaire* against the insurrectionary potential of Owenism and Chartism.¹⁸ If the manufacturer of plain cottons weighed the cost of education in the Schools very carefully and, more often than not, found against their usefulness, then his refusal tended to undermine their strict utility and to reinforce their place in a more purely cultural scheme of desirable social relations. In effect, sections of the manufacturing middle class and industrialists were accumulating a knowledge of a cultural scheme of things, and of their place within it, in an uneven way, through a variety of different experiences of organising production, or education, or social relations: and, ironically, they engaged in this cognitive process hand in hand with the artisans and workers, if not in perfect harmony. Thus art and design education emerged as a possible congruence of multifarious conflicts, refusals and agreements, in which culture could not be separated from production as a particular kind of capital.

So to come back to the 16,000 students who have passed through the schools by 1849: no one, in the Parliamentary proceedings, seems to have been clear about quite what it was that they could boast about. Poynter thought that, in all probability, not one student had become a reputed designer but that, nonetheless, there must have been some beneficial effect on industry. At the same time, it was evident that even if one percent of these students were to succeed, it would be too many. In Nottingham the best-paid designers had, in fact, come from the School. While in Birmingham, not only had the School offered nothing to the ornamental ironwork industries, but varnishers in the workshops knew more about their trade than did the School's teachers. But if the success of individual Schools depended upon their location, the surrounding industries, and other conjunctural forces – in Nottingham the concern with foreign competition for lace products was an incentive to the employment of designers – success itself cut across other economic desiderata. The overproduction of designers would only lead to a counter-productive fall in 'the cost of art', driving potential candidates out of the market again. Since 1835, the threat of a superfluity of skills had been an immanent unquiet in the development of art and design education. Industrialists and manufacturers were concerned not only with the cost of training, but with the possibility of coming to depend upon a group of skilled designers who would demand too high a wage, countering the general effect of a fall in the 'cost of art'. Or, a shortage and a surplus posed their own problems, and the right balance was not to be found by preliminary calculation.

18 See the City Archives in Manchester Central Library (M3/2/106) for an interesting insight into the middle-class buy-out of the Hall of Science, to reopen it as an asepticised library.

On 10 March 1836, when the architect C.L. Donaldson submitted a draft financial account to the Committee for the production of an illustrated edition, he explained that in France, where a knowledge of the arts was more widespread than in England, the cost would be only a half as much. But the following witness, the paper manufacturer Leon, declared that changes in his industry were so much subjected to the caprices of the market that an education in the principles of design could have no relevant effects whatsoever. One after another the witnesses took contrary positions. A silk maker from Spitalfields, who trembled at the sound of the name 'Lyon', envied French levels of skill and competence, which seemed to be more a function of a cultural level than of a less developed stage of mechanisation and division of labour. The French workers mounted their own designs on the machines, and set up their own Jacquard cards, while the English worker knew only a tiny part of the craft. And in Lyon there was a design school. A manufacturer of plain cottons in Manchester, highly mechanised, had no worries from foreign competition. Let the French take up the market in fancy cloths, Manchester would clean it up for the plain. Art schools did not even enter onto the horizon of his plans. Yet for both the silk maker and the cotton baron alike, the division of labour was essential to the achievement of a high rate of profit. If, then, it did not necessarily assist competitiveness in those sectors of production where, as Wornum noted, 'taste predominates', it was natural to displace this uneasy awareness onto the idea of cultural difference. Throughout the entire proceedings of 1835–6, where manufacturers feel touched by competition in luxury production, economic differences are transferred to the realm of cultural causality with a mythomaniac fervour.

This favoured the solution of art education for the problems of the British economy, a solution that is by no means evident from simply assessing the weight of opinions in the evidence. It fitted in with and amplified the opinions of the art professionals like G.F. Waagen, who were able to panic and stampede the Committee into accepting their very interested positions at face value. And, as a more long-term and problematic effect, it meant that the travails of the luxury sector in part predicated educational thinking for the economy as a whole.

Bearing Gifts ...

Another factor in the complex origins of the Schools was a preoccupation with the worker's fate. For, if the workers were to become (profitably) educated, then one had to be sure that profit was both the objective and the limit. Papworth (1835) announced himself against the exhibition of works of art as such to the

workers. For preference, they should only be allowed to see vases and bronzes. It was to be feared that if the workers looked too much at masterpieces of painting where the human figure – the *summum bonum* of academic art – predominated, they would want to quit their own position to follow a more honoured craft:

For one of the events to be feared of an exhibition is, that by those higher departments of art, where human figures are the chief matter, young men might be tempted to leave the intended object to pursue that which is more accredited and honoured and to the disadvantage of the manufacturing arts.¹⁹

(After this important social perception, he lapsed into a discussion of upholstery.) Cockerell (1835) agreed, and demanded a strict division between useful and artistic knowledge:

I do not think such (artistic) knowledge compatible with the occupations of artizans, and the encouragements to it would mislead them, and interfere with their proper callings, and right division of labour, in which excellence already requires all their ability ... There is every respect among artizans to men of superior knowledge, they bow to them and follow them implicitly if they have reputation for merit; but I apprehend that any attempt at a general diffusion of the higher principles would be futile. Those principles may be in a measure imbibed by the constant view of fine objects, and the encouragement of men brought up in higher schools to instruct in the lower branches of arts and manufactures, would be, in my humble opinion, the best course.²⁰

This was an opinion echoed by Cole in the *Reports* of 1848–9 and again in 1853. A fear of a new disorder flowing from a new order of education provides a hidden link between the culture of the industrial exhibitions and that of the museums and galleries. Gradually the outlines of a social levelling emerges, the overlapping of exhibitions that produce different effects in telling who you are, where you are, and how to work.

In this game of status the brilliant role-model brings two objectives into play. As the exemplary man often comes, or is said to come, from a humble back-

19 *PP*, Vol. 1.

20 *Ibid.*

ground, his life demonstrates the possibility of quitting your social status, of accepting Raphael's invitation. But in the selfsame movement, it shows the distance that has to be covered. In his opening address at the Manchester Mechanics' Institute in 1825, Benjamin Heywood cited Watt, Arkwright, Franklin, Rennie, and Brindley as men who had known how to quit their humble station and transform their lives (see note 7, above). Figures indeed who become favoured models of the illustrated popular press of the 1840s and beyond, of the *Working Man's Friend and Family Instructor*, of the *Illustrated Educator*, and they appear as movers of the marvellous world of the industrial exhibitions, as a link between this spectacle and the origins of the artisan spectator. For Heywood their rarity was not to be concealed, and if they left a residuum of possibilities that the working man could really have for himself, it was to be found in the moral example of their well-tempered lives. These great men, like the great artists who were to be models or teachers in the Schools of Design, were there to offer a way of making the most of your place, rather than of leaving it. For Cole in 1853 it was impermissible that a worker should leave his drawing board to become a portraitist, because drawing was a new language of work, able to articulate a flow of knowledge between the scientist and the artisan, between the worker and the boss, but not a route out of a social place. For this reason the precise separation of different kinds of artistic knowledge had to be defined, down to the infinitesimal details of the teaching programme. The classification of drawing programmes became both a lesson in subservience and in craft, the transmission of a skill, and a prophylactic against social movement. Even, that is, if Cole was never to keep pace either with the division of labour or with the vagaries of the market.

In 1836, making one of the few depositions that actually referred to the politics of the world outside Parliament, Edward Cowper, the proprietor of patents for steam presses, skilfully articulated the potential relation of art, profit and the peace of society. Convinced of the need for principles, he argued that if you taught the pottery worker the idea of the oval, he could not then make an ugly vase. And, further, the means to accomplish this were present in the popular illustrated press – a form of the mass diffusion of culture so powerful that Cowper could not but resist sniping at Wedgwood, who had restricted his reproduction of the Portland Vase to 30 copies. Cowper cited the *Penny Magazine*, the *Magasin Pittoresque* or the *Magasin Universel de Paris* as a type of press needing only his machines to bring Raphael, Rubens, Teniers, Murillo, the *Laocoon* and the entire *Parthenon Marbles* before the public:

And every Saturday I have the satisfaction of reflecting that 360,000 copies of these useful publications are issued to the public, diffusing science and

taste and good feeling, without one sentence of an immoral tendency in the whole ... [this press] is indeed the paper currency of art and represents sterling value.²¹

The 'auratic' value of great art will find its recognition and effect precisely in the process of its mass reproduction – a process that itself will increase the productive forces. And, if you couple to this diffusion of good political economy, then:

Of the diffusion of an 8 shilling volume of Political Economy, perhaps 750 copies might be sold in two years, and teach the rich the advantage of machinery, but would never reach the poor: whereas, of the little 1 shilling work, called the 'Results of Machinery', 25,000 copies were sold, and in the hands of the poor in three months, and checked, in a most decided manner, the burning of threshing machines and other farming property.²²

It is not possible to overemphasise the uneven, confused and inconsequent nature of the depositions made to the various Committees between 1835 and 1849. They are shot through with so many diverse interests and skills, and clearly the evidence of a John Martin or a William Dyce will tend to represent not only their particular professional view on the question of design education, but also becomes a site for the working out of other conflicts such as that over the status and role of the Royal Academy. In 1836 the London jeweller Robert Butt contradicted *himself* every two phrases in trying to work out why the English should triumph in one aspect of the market and the French in another. The only solid fact that he could cling onto was that the French had a system of ornamental art schools and a more readily available stock of culture for the attention of the popular classes. Where Cockerell came out against the use of the human figure in design education, Charles Toplis, the Director of the London Mechanics' Institute, demanded some elements of the artist's education in design courses. James Nasmyth, the inventor of the steam hammer, and a considerable figure in Marx's gallery of formidable capitalists in *Capital*, spoke (in 1836) of a direct relation between the beauty of a machine, the economy of its materials, and its usefulness. For him the improvement of artistic knowledge amongst the workmen entered into the amelioration of the chain of command in industry. The better the workmen were educated, the more readily they would execute their bosses' orders and understand his

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

instructions. In this Nasmyth forestalled the later ideas of Cole, as well as the thinking of Léon de Laborde and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in France.²³ His view probably could lead us into the particular nature of his industry and the requirements made of workers, for certainly at a later date in France a type of design education was developed around the need for mechanics skilled in the installation of machines rather than their operation. In the end, the position or economic power of the witnesses was probably less important than the loading of the questions, a skill in manipulating the opinion of the Committees through the level of attention they paid to preparing their evidence and using it to carry conviction – Cole won all the top prizes here.

The most cynical witnesses, however, were certainly those who were the most indifferent to the objectives of the Committees. In 1835 and 1836 particularly, they limited themselves to asserting the supremacy of British industry in the highly mechanised sectors, and to questioning the profitability of good taste. If anything, this left Committee members more open to being impressed by the arguments of the cultural professionals – the artists, historians or museum directors like Waagen. Their tales of European art education, which paid little attention to its realities, and their mythologising of the ancient world and the Renaissance workshop, provided a magnificent display of cultural desiderata that made the displacement of economic problems into cultural difference all the more tempting, as an easy way out of the impasse of contradictions. On the whole the smaller manufacturers, who supported the idea of design education, were the more vociferous in insisting that its success would depend upon the improvement of the copyright laws, arguing that no one in their right senses would pay for a design that was going to be stolen and mass-produced by a bigger competitor. But they were agreed in their ill-formulated desire to attenuate the adverse effects and symptoms of the profitable division of labour that, nonetheless, seemed to weaken them in some areas of international competition.

When they enthused over the French system of design education, they had not time to notice that many of its elements dated from the last third of the eighteenth century, that they had been geared to the state monopolies and that they were, by the 1830s, generally dilapidated. In fact, design education was so run down and marginalised by the expansion of the French economy that Léon de Laborde, in his great report on the 1851 Exhibition, called for a French system to be set up that would be the equivalent of the (crisis-ridden) British Schools of Design.

23 See de Laborde 1856, and Viollet-le-Duc 1875.

The symmetry of this international envy developed quite perfectly, and it was equally well founded on both sides of the Channel. The British Schools, devoted to a task rendered impossible even before the event, were eventually left to the role of structuring a social accession to culture where art and industry would define themselves in terms of their difference. And the mutual consumption of the one by the other would remain a vague hope. In their turn, the French educationalists found a role for design in the national scholarisation of their population in the secular programmes of the Third Republic.

Out in the Shops ...

It should be clear that the questions of design education form part of a wider set of questions that need to be asked about the formation of a national and popular industrial culture, oriented around the perception and consumption of commodities. The other important element in the discussions that we have reviewed was, therefore, the consumer. If, at the beginning, it was hoped that art would turn out to be something of a stake in the play for higher profits, it had to be generalised as an object having different effects in the ordering of social processes. Already in 1834, witnesses were aware of the problem that a sophisticated system of production required sophisticated consumers, men and women prepared to pay back the investment of art in production through appropriately higher prices. As Walter Benjamin remarked:

On the same measure as the expertness of a customer declines the importance of his taste increases – both for him and for the manufacturer. For the consumer it has the value of a more or less elaborate masking of his lack of expertness. Its value to the manufacturer is a fresh stimulus to consumption which in some cases is satisfied at the expense of other requirements of consumption which the manufacturer would find more costly to meet.²⁴

Or, in other words the gap between taste as a function of an expanding market – that is to say, adaptation to the expansion of consumption through fashion – and taste as the understanding of ‘principles of design’, is one that cannot be closed. The less so as the market itself grows through the recruitment of new buyers, in the main little educated in traditional values. Erroneous candlesticks

24 Benjamin 1973a, p. 105.

simply sold better than correct and truthful ones, something that Cole was forced to acknowledge in 1853.²⁵

In pointing to the 'probability that there would be a sufficient public to appreciate better art', Cole quotes the opinions of some eminent jewellers, for example of Garrard, who say that:

In a great commercial and speculative country there are always opulent persons emerging from vulgarity who think more of show than beauty. Such persons seldom go to first-rate shops, but to persons who are as ignorant as themselves in all matters of taste ...²⁶

What follows suggests a pattern of buying that later comes to be called 'conspicuous consumption', and Mr Angell confirms the problem:

I do not think there is a sufficient public able to appreciate better art and art-workmanship, if obtained, and who would be willing to pay an increase of price for the same if necessary. I believe the taste of the manufacturer is already very considerably in advance of the public, and feel assured that any increase of price will at once retard the sale with all but persons of cultivated taste.²⁷

And so on. Cole's vocabulary on the market is fraught with the same traps that brought to grief the programmes of the Manchester School. In a situation of the greatest imaginable diversity, how is one going to reconcile principle with particularity?

For Cole, as for the other functionaries and artists who surrounded him, there were at least two ways out, of which one was to maintain the Schools in their intended state. The other was to engage in the widest generalisation of artistic knowledge and the principles of industrial design. It appears that, as functionaries, with a well-developed professional momentum, they could try to follow both at once. Without having to really respond to the calculations and reservations of the manufacturers on the cost of art and the organisation of the work process, they could both maintain their utilitarian discourse on the Schools and follow the more purely cultural tendency. So they both strengthened the means of cultural education, with the foundation of the South

²⁵ 'First Report of the Department of Practical Art', *PP*, Vol. 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Kensington Museum, for example, and they engaged in the more exhaustive search for universal principles of design. In this light, Owen Jones's *Grammar of Ornament* can be seen both as a response to the problems confronting the Cole circle, and an unconfessed admission of their defeat. Through the exhaustive structures of encyclopaedic knowledge, and the confused speculations of his aphorisms, Jones pushed towards a knowledge that could be revealed through quantitative accumulation, and applied – if only because it was all-inclusive. How, and with what effect, remained – alas – no more precise than the alternative ploy of exposing 'dull boys' to Raphael.²⁸

And so we arrive at another impasse. To engage in the search for the principles of design, design theory had to become professionalised, and to become ever more the activity of a new élite of intellectuals. Just as art and industry failed to consummate their marriage in the Schools, design founded on true principles had to be separated from the object of daily use or fashionable consumption. Good taste and serious design also acquired a profile that took its form from its difference with industry. And what was to have been artistic work took on the character, very simply, of work. A space was created where both the avatars of capitalism and its critics equally had to work and think, locating the commodities of luxury production within different systems of use and exchange, truth and falsehood, principles and commercial opportunism.

Truth in Candlesticks ...

Coming back to the texts with which we started out, it can be seen that their wish to produce sense articulates itself more through the viability of a system of possible reference and difference than in the coherence of their grammar or their superficial coherence. This is not a question of the real meaning being absent, either, but of the complexity of the ways in which position within social relations and perceptions of economy, morality, aesthetic, and political phenomena interact to produce both the expression and the veiling of difference. It remains curious to note, however, how feeble are any direct echoes of the political turbulence of the whole period from 1834 to 1848, even though it formed an important element in the experience of the participants in the Committees and Schools. If we have left political conflict very much in the background of this essay, it has not been to privilege one formative element in the *art/industry* language at the expense of another. Rather it has been intended to suggest how

28 This and the subsequent section were written in association with an unpublished essay by Maurice Dennis, which takes up the question of the design professionals in terms of the discussions on the Civil Service and the concept of the urban gentry.

inseparable and irreconcilable experiences register themselves in a specialised language whose function is not their direct expression. It remains to sketch some possibilities of the circulation of this language as national and popular.

Here it is worth looking at the kind of press vaunted by Edward Cowper, the *Penny Magazine* and its kind, especially in their attitude to the 1851 Exhibition. In the *Working Man's Friend and Family Instructor*, for example, that flagship of the self-improving Cassell press, the Exhibition took pride of place alongside the usual articles on gardening, self-education and the lives of great men. In the maelstrom of useful information and hints for artisans, on how to travel, how to behave, how to go round London, the magazine tries to construct the working man or woman as the ideal viewer of the Exhibition. It risks everything in directing the workers' gaze as much to their own condition as to the magnificence of the objects on display, admitting that they may well feel deprived of the fruits of their labour in the midst of so much unownable luxury. But if the workers do feel dispossession, then they should also see that the beauty and the quality of the objects is something that goes beyond the mere process of production or the fact of who owns them – they enter into the realm of a shared national glory, a language of abstract ideals that links the skill of labour and the power of capital within an all-embracing unity and proper order. The terms of admiration offer the sublimation of social disaffection in the public display of the Great Exhibition.

It was only a few of the old Chartist newspapers or Union journals that rejected the Exhibition outright and, apart from these, it is hard to know exactly what representatives of the working class actually thought of the social image that was on offer. We do not have the same kinds of exhaustive discussions that were left by the French *Commission Ouvrière*. Nonetheless, the language of *art/industry* was an image that seemed to enter into discussions of certain sections of the skilled working class on the values of work and on the perfecting of its conditions.

Looking ahead over a decade it is present in the reports of the British delegates to the Exposition Universelle of 1867.²⁹ The two introductory essays on the 'Conditions and Habits of the French Working Classes' by Richard Whiteing and Robert Coningsby, as well as some of the individual reports, read as a

29 *Reports of the British Artizans* on the Paris Universal Exposition of 1867, a collection of texts originating in the visit of a delegation organised by the Society of Arts. The reports, resulting from a private visit, make a stark contrast to the state-organised reflections of the French workers, which took the character of a real site of class conflict and social and economic criticism. However, amongst the British delegates were members of the Council of the International Working Men's Association, such as the watchmaker Jung

condensation of the languages of 1835. It is not a simple repetition, but is used to give voice to preoccupations with the rate of work and loss of skill, the hours to be devoted to popular leisure, and so on. For the skilled workers, too, the language of *art and industry* expresses problems of international competition in terms of the right and ability of workers of different countries to have access to education and culture. In his report Coningsby goes into an ecstatic state in front of the working-class cafes of Lyon or Paris. His description of the Café de l'Empereur or the Café Delta,³⁰ while they certainly mistake the exceptional for the normal, fly off into a fantastic dream where all the beauties of industrial art form the decor of the workers' leisure: if he is crushed by his work, then he is cosseted by the luxury of the café and the service of the waiters! In the face of this, let us abolish the English pub!

And here, perhaps, is our last problem. It is all very well for the worker to express such civilised and, no doubt, civilising sentiments. But if this language is so disinterested, so freely expressive of common interests, then it can only recuperate social difference at the risk of really revealing it. Necessarily, it must find the means to disavow its own objective. Also, it may be worth thinking about the power of the language of *art and industry* in the wider field of political formations. For, after all, the First International came out of the world of the Exhibitions, and can hardly have been untouched by their conceptions of work. Some of its members made the trip to Paris in 1867, and in doing that they were organised by the Society of Arts rather than by Marx.

and the carpenter Lucraft. Some of the preliminary discussions for the founding of the IWMA had taken place in London in 1862, during the visit of the French delegates to the British Exhibition.

30 Amusingly, the Café Delta appears in contemporary guides to a more *louche* version of Parisian pleasure than the one that is registered here.

Murals of the Buvette de la Commune – A Pictorial Dossier

My first encounter with Gaillard fils, son of his father Napoléon Gaillard, shoemaker of Nîmes and Chef des Barricades of the Paris Commune, was in following up a suggestion of the great Commune scholar Eugene Schulkind that I look at the little broadsheet the Gaillards had put out to circulate news of the great club movement that marked the fall of the Second Empire – *l'Orateur des Clubs*. He warned me not to take it too seriously. I guess too that he would have had little time for the father's astonishing booklet of 1858 on the foot-shaped shoe and the use of Gutta Percha as a labour saving material, *Mémoire descriptif de la chaussure française en gutta-percha, par Napoléon Gaillard* – many of his customers had bitter complaints.¹ After all, I was supposed to realise, these rowdy workers with cultural pretensions were not to be compared to the real heroes of the Commune, Eugene Varlin or Louise Michel. And, likewise, they did not fall quite into the political space of Jacques Rancière's worker poets, only just emerging from the shadows in his early articles before *La nuit des prolétaires*.²

According to his Notice Contumax (Charge in absentia/exile) of the Sixteenth War Council, No. 116, 1879, his true name was Gustave Napoléon Cortès, from his mother, and he had been condemned in absentia to deportation by the same 16e Conseil de Guerre on 18 October 1872, by which time he was already in Carouge, a suburb of Geneva, where so many Communards had collected.³ A long report by the agent who signed himself L x, in the Archives of the Parisian Prefecture of Police, of April 1872, is possibly the most detailed description of the Buvette that we have, despite many chatty press reports about the owners, the regulars and the general decor. Each of the letters of the sign had been made of interlinked allegorical, but contemporary figures and forms – ‘... *B* is formed of a red flag surmounted by a phrygian cap, the pole is formed with the figure of an upright fédéré (communard soldier), the flag floats stretched out held by the fédéré's bayonet, and this is how the superior lobe of the *B* is formed’. This miracle of clumsy ekphrasis is what remains to us, and the long exposition of the sign

¹ N. Gaillard 1858.

² Rancière 1981.

³ Item 116, dossier of the Archives de la Guerre, Vincennes.

is followed by only a short one of the murals inside. We owe it to the newspaper *Le Gaulois* of 11 September 1873 to tell us that ‘to the left of the entrance a showcase has been constructed enclosing photographic reproductions of the works of Gaillard fils, price: 1 franc a piece’. So the Gaillards, true to form, set about earning from their cultural work, and by the most advanced methods – from Gutta Percha to Photography.

Anyhow I soon fell in love with this rather fey young man who worked as a poet, a draughtsman and cartoonist, and what we would now call a cultural activist, a long haired auto-didact, whose activity lasted from the late 1860s until somehow the police lose sight of him in the crowds of the Parisian left almost three decades later. So I pursued him through archives from Paris to Amsterdam and Geneva, and, in 1988, after a decade of looking for some undisputed image of him and for a more or less complete record of his magnum opus, the wall paintings made for the Buvette de la Commune – I did indeed find what looked like a selection of the contents of that showcase. They were buried in one of the major archives of the Commune, the huge collection of books and documents that found their way into the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire of Geneva that was made by another exiled Communard, Jules Perrier. They are not catalogued quite carefully enough to fall upon them other than by persistence and chance. I photographed them all and that was that. Here they are at last, with some digital enhancement.

They figure in neither of the most exhaustive recent works on art and the Commune, Albert Boime’s *Art and the French Commune: Imagining Paris after War and Revolution* and Bertrand Tillier’s, *La Commune de Paris, Révolution sans images? Politique et représentations dans la France républicaine, 1871–1914*.⁴ No one has taken them seriously.

Jules Perrier acquired the murals themselves, and eventually gave them as part of a collection of art work, including Courbets and Hodlers, to his native town of Ars en Ré to found a municipal museum, in 1908. By 1948 the inspector of the Louvre selected what he found worthwhile from its by then catastrophic delapidation, and in 1952 the remainder was put up to auction.⁵ The exhaustive archives of the French auction houses show no records of Gaillard’s work, so I guess that this is it!

4 Boime 1997; Tillier 2004.

5 Vuilleumier 1960, and 1971.



FIGURE 24 Murals of the Buvette de la Commune (*i*)



FIGURE 25 Murals of the Buvette de la Commune (ii)

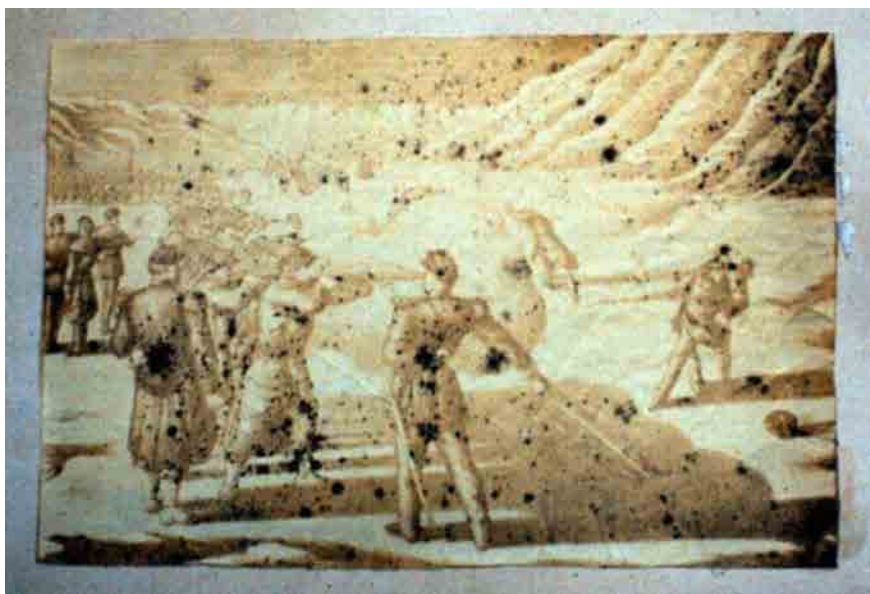


FIGURE 26 Murals of the Buvette de la Commune (iii)



FIGURE 27 Murals of the Buvette de la Commune (iv)

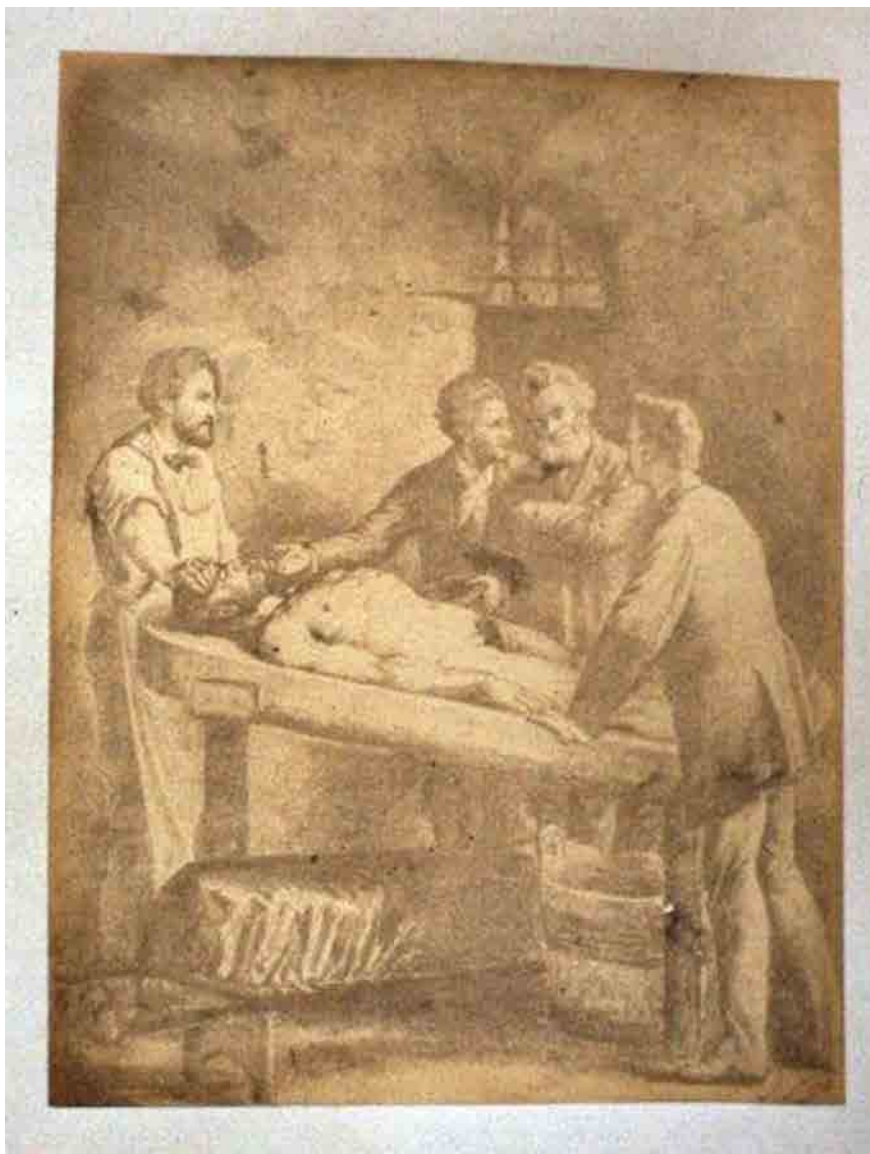


FIGURE 28 Murals of the Buvette de la Commune (v)



FIGURE 29 Murals of the Buvette de la Commune (vi)

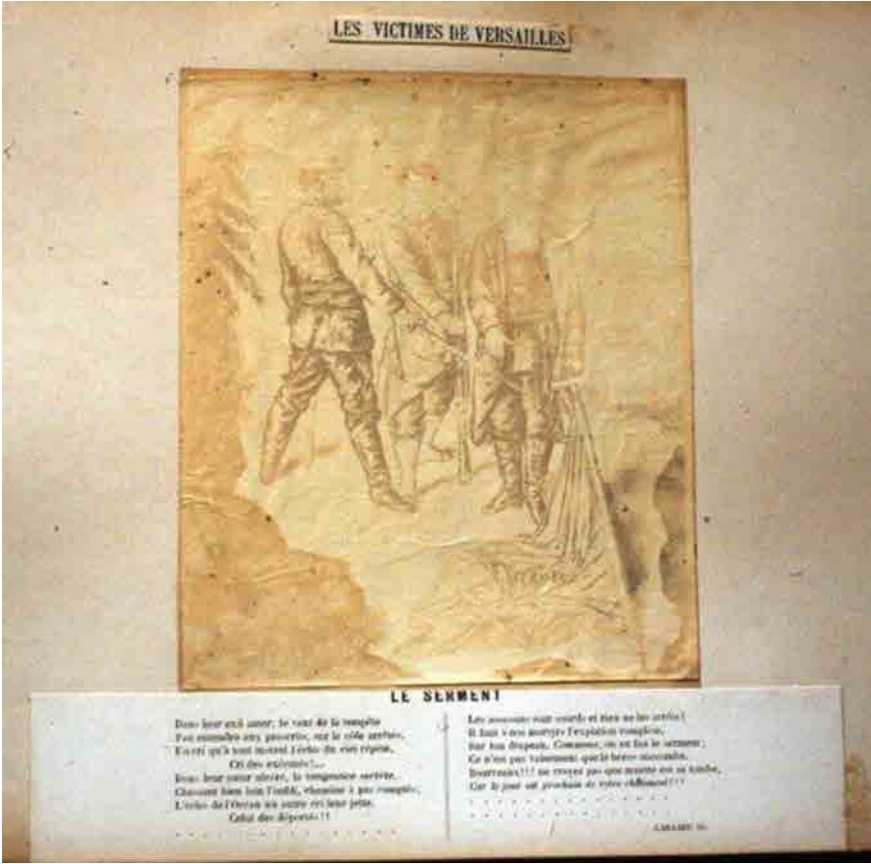


FIGURE 30 Murals of the Buvette de la Commune (vii)



FIGURE 31 Murals of the Buvette de la Commune (viii)



FIGURE 32 Murals of the Buvette de la Commune (ix)



FIGURE 33 Murals of the Buvette de la Commune (x)

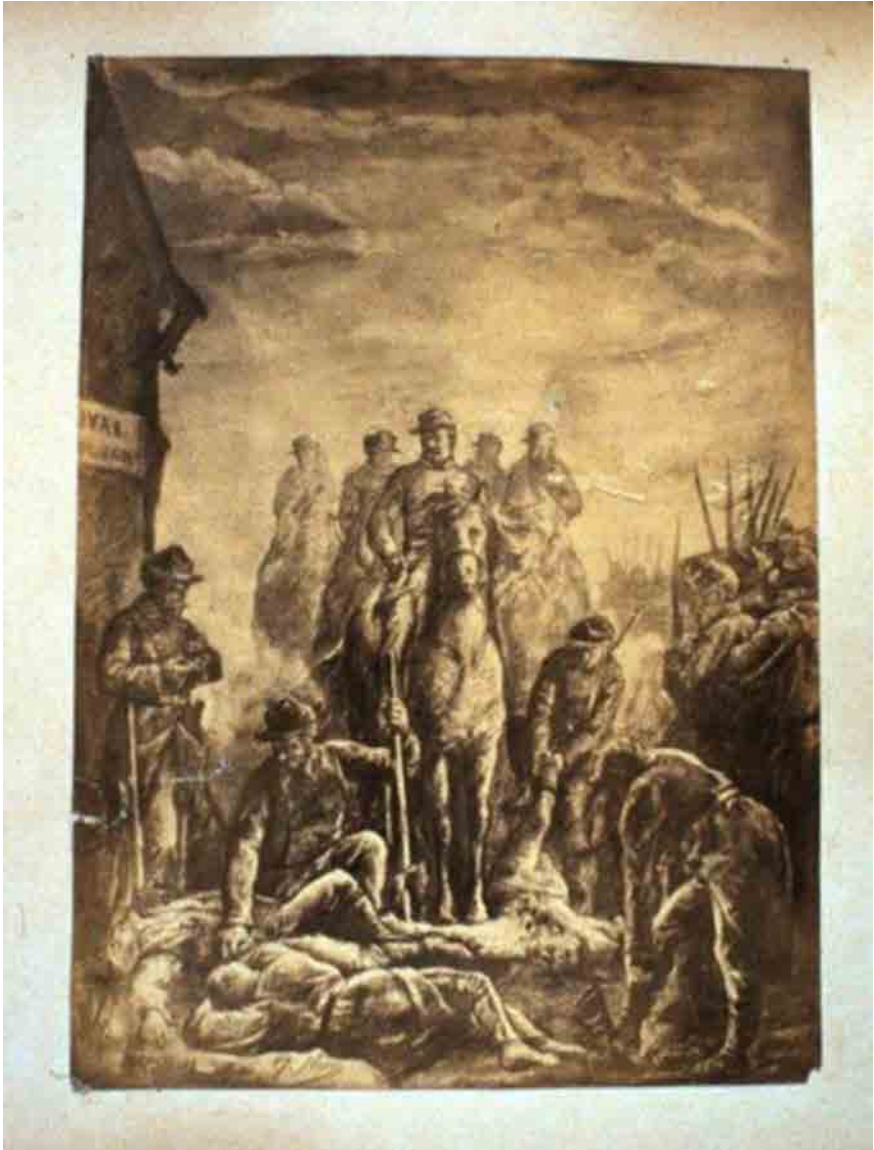


FIGURE 34 Murals of the Buvette de la Commune (xi)

PART 3

Paris and More on the People



Musical Moments

For Celia



Part One¹

In 1913 Lucien Descaves opens his *Philemon*, his novel-as-oral-history of the Communard Exiles in Switzerland, with a description of Paris, a sparse and bare description that offers up a city of traces, of a kind of history.

At the boundary of the fourteenth arrondissement [ward] and on the edges of the thirteenth, the rue de la Santé crosses a suburb of Paris which could be the envy of a remote, pious, and quiet sous-préfecture ...

In the section contained between Boulevard Arago and the rue Humboldt particularly, no commerce other than that of a wine merchant with a shop sign, La Bonne Santé, across the street from the prison, breaks up a long series of walls behind which human suffering and poverty are relegated, as in contiguous lazarets ... an archipelago of sorrows.

People there are seized at birth and only abandoned at death, satiated with the illusion of having lived. Their destiny is inscribed in a triangle to which everything brings them back. At the top, the hospice of Assistance to children, at the center, the Cochin Hospital, the prison, the Sainte-Anne asylum; on one of the side streets, Ricord and Maternity; on the other the former site of capital executions ... There is a very short way to go, and no way of wandering – all the buildings communicate with each other.²

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1 My thanks to a number of friends and colleagues who have assisted in the writing of this piece. First, Alice Kaplan and Kristin Ross for convincing me that it was worth writing; Molly Nesbit, for many conversations about Paris; A.J. Dunn, for a fine critical reading of the manuscript; and my many French friends, for tolerating my ethnocentrism: Anet and Michel Melot, Claire Beauchamps, Denis Echard, et al.

2 Descaves 1913, pp. 1–2.

Such brevity performs a complicated trajectory. If the attenuation of physical description is so complete as to excite little in the imagination, it allows for a rapid shift from the observed to the moral. The lack of architectural detail becomes a metaphor of the human suffering and of its effacement, and it is the plan – not the elevation – of the faubourg that alone represents this suffering's circuit and the closure of its repetitive motion. But, also, this setting itself prepares for the narration that is to follow. The thirteenth arrondissement constitutes a well-defined topos of popular militancy, as a historical site both of working-class economic activity, in the tanneries of the Bièvre, and of political activity at the time of the Commune and before. In the suggestion of its past the political optimism of the revolution can be evoked as nostalgia, while the bitterness and other nostalgia of failure can be felt through the harshness of the present.

As he opens his story, the narrator (Descaves), has just rented a place to live in this faubourg. '... a little pavilion behind one of these six-story buildings which face the street on its right'. Here he has a tree in his garden, 'in Paris, a luxury in itself'. However, it is in the building on the street that an old man lives who will turn out to be an ex-Communist, and who will unlock for Descaves the entire content of his own current research – into the life of the Swiss 'proscription' of 1871. So the quartier not only already contains the narrative that Descaves has undertaken to write, but it also contains him within it, alongside the object of his study. And it is he who lives in the older building, the pavilion, while it is his informant who inhabits the six-floor block, more utilitarian, specifically constructed for the cheap lodging of the 'classes populaires', no doubt. Descaves gradually becomes aware of the peculiar character of the old man and his wife, especially upon hearing that they argue through singing popular songs of different political tendencies. Increasingly conscious that they are bearers of the culture that preoccupies him, he listens, watches and collates signs of their lives with other 'faits divers', until he knows that he is in the presence of the history that he seeks. Meeting the old man, he wins his confidence, which means that he must overcome the resentment of worker against intellectual, and becomes for him the bearer of his past. Through his narrative, and the services he performs for the old man, he assumes the role of executor of the revolution's heritage. In the special overlappings of Parisian social structures, it becomes possible for the intellectual both to confirm the fixity of a history in its site and to bear it out of that triangle of the prison, the hospital, and the place of execution that he himself has mapped out. One effect of this movement, in its social structure, is that historical meaning becomes inseparable from the evolution of a set of literary tropes.

The first photograph is one of these, and is an attempt to reinvent the classic *taudis* [hovel] of some time in the last century and somewhere in the thirteenth arrondissement (Fig. 35). That is, to take an old, working-class dwelling still left in an area (in this case the Butte aux Cailles), to isolate it, and so to free it to illustrate a historical discourse on the city and the Commune. The nonapparent irony of the photograph is that it could only have been taken thanks to the legal restrictions on expulsion and building types that set some, temporary limit to the processes of gentrification. For the Butte aux Cailles, with its unplanned mixture of low houses and six-floor buildings is a desirable area; and the city government has endowed its central crossroad with those street blocking flowerpots made of thrown up cobble stones that turn a memory of barricades into a civic decor. Anyway, as I was focusing the camera an old woman approached me to ask what could be my interest in such a broken-down old place, in which she lived. My explanation – Paris, Paris history, Commune, architecture, students... left her nonplussed, but partially assuaged the fear that I was the representative of some developer, precisely trying to capture charm in the place. It is still the custom in France to buy apartments occupied by old people on the cheap – one only has to wait. For her, however, this dilapidation was better by far than expulsion to the suburbs, though she took a certain interest in improvements going on next door, a house already owned by young professionals.

These, of course, in coming to an area like this, destroy the charm they are looking for.³ To tolerate their own role in this process of social recomposition, hygienisation, expropriation, and revaluation they must, through their own social group, fantasise some other kind of worthwhile neighborliness. For instance, the naming of restaurants and cafés in terms that connote a revolutionary history and the emphasis of ‘cooperatives’ in the supply of such services, these constitute an aspect of the way in which those with access to history can live out a history of the population they have replaced. In another site, of some of the most brutal expulsions, the Ilot St. Paul in the fourth arrondissement, the change in streetlife is characterised by an enormous number of antique shops. Like the cafés, restaurants, and bookshops of the Butte, they market history as a commodity where the actual historical fabric has fallen prey to the mortician’s art of renovation, and where social diversity, which is an effect of the city’s history, has been suppressed.

The photograph, then, which is intended to amplify a particular historical analysis, can do this only on condition that the analysis itself remain uncon-

3 See Castells 1972 for a mathematical formulation of this process.



FIGURE 35 *Doorway, rue Samson*

scious of its own fantasy. As it is, the image names a nostalgia that can only come into being through the elimination of its subject. Just as, with the diminution of their irony, Atget's photographs fade into great art, this attenuated Atget-like beauty alone can remain as justification for the image. Just as, in Francis Carco's sentimental song of dead love, 'Chanson tendre' [Tender Song], in a 'chambre abandonnée' [deserted room], everything remains in place except an original meaning. 'On s'en fout' [To hell with it]. Yet memorialists of old Paris from Georges Cain to Richard Cobb, even if the signification of 'old' and of 'Paris' changes from one to another, have relied upon the identification of their individual nostalgia for what they feel to be lost with entire processes of historical change. Without this identification their works would appear simply irrational, and it would not be possible to let slip from view the way in which the nostalgia feeds off change and destruction almost to the point of being their reason. So, in Cobb the photographs themselves do violence to the city in their random selection of one or another dilapidated court or café.⁴ Abstracted from the actual fabric of the city within the relations of social life, they can only figure as phrases in a discourse of Old Paris. Also, depending upon what part of the city is looked at, and what memories of what histories are called up, the same streets and the same buildings can serve the elaboration of different meanings. Even in a single text – Hillairet's dictionary of Paris streets⁵ – a single area like the Marais has histories that function differently in its present use. If the use which is passing now, its history as an old Jewish area, is therefore the most apt for nostalgia, it is the more distant aristocratic history that values the restoration of old Hôtels [Mansions] for the use of a new, wealthy middle class. And these meanings must be blind to their difference from each other, and so, too, to their unity. Otherwise they must enter into a conflict where they will come to dominate, so that their politics will no longer be silent, and their interests openly articulated. In Hillairet they simply jostle with each other as architectural description and historical anecdote.⁶

This blindness and unspoken conflict is not unlike the daily use of the city for different purposes. Crossing the Tuileries in summer, from Rivoli to the quai; from the crowds of tourists and art lovers, to the childrens' entertainment of sideshows and boats; to the cruising and flesh display of the *habitudes*

4 Cobb 1980.

5 Hillairet 1963.

6 See Cain 1912; Hillairet 1963. My conception of Old Paris is indebted to many conversations with Molly Nesbit.

of the terrasse and the river's edge; it is a crossing of open and mutual clandestinities, even if individuals make the move from one to another. In this way, then, the daily use of the city and historical/literary uses display a common structure, and it is also common to take these two as the same. In a book like Louis Chevalier's *Montmartre du plaisir et du crime*, or Francis Carco's *Du Montmartre au Quartier Latin*, this conflation coincides with the identification of personal experience with history in the production of nostalgia.⁷ While Chevalier can easily pick out countless instances of the articulation of criminality as pleasure, or of death as entertainment, and their inversions, he reads them as attributes of his experience of place, and their complexity as attributes of the nuances of that place – some forms of violence at Blanche are not the same as at Barbès, and so on. In effect, social relations subjected to a connoisseurship of their representation, cease to be relations at all. They are only things to be named, like birdwatching without ecology. The processes implicit in the naming, that value and order it, stay out of sight and out of earshot. For all their apparent attachment to the specificity of historical moment, then, the namers can hardly give voice to historical change; expropriators themselves, they can at the most produce the formulas into which another experience, of dispossession for example, might be displaced, within the boundaries that they produce for culture. This is why 'love', or its loss, which is one of the most common themes in song, might, at certain moments, voice something else as well. This possibility of standing in is the basis for the popularity, which is also the ambiguity, of a refrain like:

Je n'attends plus rien
 Rien désormais ne m'appartient
 Je n'ai gardé que d'vieilles histoires
 Au fond de ma mémoire ...

Music Cazeaux, Guillermin, words Poterat, recorded by Fréhel

[I expect nothing anymore / Nothing henceforth belongs to me / I've kept only old stories / Deep in my memory ...]⁸

Moment 1

It is a pity that only one journal, (as far as can be seen) a music magazine, referred to *Carmen* as 'musique Communarde' (in its review of the opening

7 Chevalier 1980; Carco 1929.

8 Note that all translations are literal and make no attempt to communicate tone.

night). If many of the reviewers were professionally uninterested, curious or cautiously enthusiastic in their reception, a number latched onto signs of some kind of social disorder in the scene, and it seems to have been their views that placed the opera in French musical history for the short term at least, as a failure. Best summed up in a standard musical history of 1885:

Were the music as interesting as it is uneven and hybrid in its composition, it could not redeem the shame of such a subject, which for two centuries had never dishonored a stage meant for the delicate pleasures and amusements of good society.⁹

True, if one were to take only the highest literary standards in judging *Carmen*, it fell far short of the finesse and subtlety of Mérimée's story, by then 30 years old and a classic of the naturalist genre. But the Opéra Comique was, very simply, a place for making marriage introductions among the children of the upper classes, where even the stock-in-trade of opera, death on stage, was already excessive. And there, on the scene, 3 March 1875, the mezzo Gallié-Marie sits on a table and entices a soldier to desertion and the exercise of sexual freedom. So there unfolds an unintended confrontation of the two polar opposites of bourgeois sexual life, the 'fille' [prostitute] on stage and the 'jeune fille' [young woman] in the *loges*, the inhabitant of the 'bas-étage' [lower floor] and the inhabitant of the first. Any dumb policeman on vice duties knows, that, if he goes into a bistrot and the girls are sitting on the tables, or have their feet up on them, he is not dealing with the genre of the exotic, nor can the local colour of Bizet's Spanish tunes induce this illusion in the Salle Favart. Any good bourgeois knows that the Communards of 1871 were drunks, that prostitutes like dancing because their nature is agitated, that it is because of their nature that they like men ... too much! So perhaps the reason none of the critics, favourable or unfavourable, quoted the line, with which Carmen entices Jose, 'La chose énivrante, la liberté, la liberté ...' [The intoxicating thing, freedom, freedom ...], was because it was too obvious that it should not be heard. Be that as it may, the presence of the *fille* in literary culture, unchastened by its moralising fires, was remarked the same week in *Le Figaro* in an article questioning the literary status of Marion Lescaut. Speaking of 'filles', and comparing Prévost to Balzac:

⁹ Clément 1885.

... It is necessary to depict them, since they are everywhere, since they climb up to all levels of society in this rising tide of low morals. But he [Balzac] depicted them with the fire of his genius and this fire burns and purifies everything ...

In *Carmen*, then, a 'Manon Lescaut de plus bas étage' [lowest class] had crawled onto the stage, clicking her castanettes to the subversion of military order, in the privileged place of the middle-class marriage market.

A few critics ironised about this, but the more touching irony unfolded in their columns a week before, and not far away, in the Gaieté, where a lavish revival of Offenbach's 'Geneviève de Brabant' had just opened. Here, to a man, they heap praises on the performance of Thérèse in the role of Biscotte. Yesterday's 'fille', the raucous and stupidly bawdy heroine of the cafés-concerts of the late 1860s, and foundress of a music hall style for the entirety of the Third Republic, had moved from the 'street' to the stage. In the process she became a great 'artiste'. The respected Gallié-Marie, on the other hand, tainted her reputation not because she sang *Carmen* badly, but because she sang her too well. *Carmen* was not performed again until 1883. Not that military insubordination had come into fashion. On the contrary, when Eugène Pottier's little-known poem, 'L'Internationale', was set to music, in 1888, the authorities preferred that it should not be sung.

Here, then, a few marking points of a geopolitics of cultural meaning are in their place. A marking of space within histories and nostalgia, and two movements of a *fille* – one from literary 'street' to operatic stage, one from street to operatic stage. At this point the fictionally 'loose woman', Carmen, is rather more frightening than the penitent *chanteuse*.

Part Two

Moment 2

January 1932, in the Boîte à Matelots, Lys Gauty is presenting a subtle and refined programme of songs, much admired by her worldly clientele. They sit at their tables and talk or listen, or, to a number of songs, they can dance as well. Like the audience for salon music of a century before – of Chopin, for example, they will miss little if they pay only partial attention, as one repetition or another will make itself heard, while the wider repertoire of phrases and images within which the songs are produced is already well-known. It is not easy to imagine quite what went on in places like this. Reading contemporary accounts of clubs and bars, like Francis de Miomandre's *Dancings*, feels more

like a tradition of description that descends from Delvau's *Cythères*,¹⁰ than sociological fact. The sexual codings that determine the tone of Miomandre's distinctions between one or another club excite a desire for distinction that precedes the objects distinguished, opening out into a voyeuristic imagination of city life. The author's act of revelation itself carries much of the charge. And if you were to speak to old nightlifers, there is no guarantee that what they remember doesn't come from the gramophone, and is no different from the memories of people who never set foot in such expensive spots. Going out to enjoy yourself for a night is not an activity usually subjected to much interrogation. (Other factors apart, 'having a good time' does not seem to be quite as worthy of theorisation as 'pleasure' or 'jouissance'.) So, it can be supposed only, that this audience has decided not to go to the Vikings, or the College Inn, or the Jungle, or even to the Bateau Ivre, where 'the Baron of Repsfeld, proprietor of the "Bateau-Ivre" assured me that he would need the Gotha to give the list of his patrons who were dancing the tango like vulgar scruffs'.¹¹ On another evening they could have gone to a Bal Antillais, to learn to dance with real rhythm, but listening to a singer like Lys Gauty, they are not after non-stop noise of bands and loudspeakers, 'for fear that all illusion of pleasure be engulfed in a note of silence'.¹² Lys's songs, rather, will weave a special, literary kind of magic, in which different types of cultural referent will overlap and merge into each other. This evening she includes work of Nylson Fysher, her sometime patron of the expensive Boîte 'Chez Fysher'. There she made her debut to upper-class audiences, as did many other singers of her generation like Lucienne Boyer. It was a place where wealthy and titled people would pay a fortune to hear the 'chansons de la rue' [street songs], and, more important, to rub shoulders with and 'tutoyer' [say 'tu' to] the 'filles du peuple' who sang them. Writing of 'Chez Fysher' in his memoirs, Vincent Scotto described Fréhel in her youth:

Sought after, wined and dined, witty, splendid, gavroche, she was the queen of the place. From her, everything was accepted. She could dare anything ... One night, addressing the queen of Rxxx who was wearing an enormous pearl necklace around her neck, she did not hesitate to say to

10 Miomandre 1932; Delvau 1864. For accounts of Paris nightlife, see Brunschwig et al. 1981, and a dictionary, Barbedette et al. 1977.

11 Lucie Derain, *VU*, 31 December 1930.

12 R. de Beauplan and G. de Belay in a late '20s magazine. These quotations are taken from the 'recueils factices' of press cuttings in the section Ro/Théâtre of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, as are all the later press comments on Damia, Fréhel, and Piaf.

her: 'Well, old girl, don't you think that your necklace would suit my neck better than yours?' People were looking at each other, a little embarrassed even so.

– 'When you are my age, you will perhaps have one.'

And Fréhel answered without losing her cool:

– 'You are right, I am not yet ugly enough to own jewelry'¹³

The musician Georges van Parys, (who continued to compose for a later generation of artistes like Gréco or Mouloudji), accompanied the singers at Fysher in the late '20s, when he and Gauty recorded *Paradis de rêve* [Dream Paradise], a poem of Richepin set by Nylson Fysher. The text is an elaborately overstretched image of sexual pleasure as voyage, and the music recalls the salon delicacies of Reynaldo Hahn. Lys uses a rather tight sounding half voice, plenty of rapid vibrato and she draws out and purifies vowels and 'ou' sounds to the verge of the ridiculous. So the whole style of the piece signals its artistic character and points to a gulf between the demands of the nightclub public, and the public of the Casino de Paris, the Folies Bergères, or the Moulin Rouge. The crass orchestral *ritournelles* of Mistinguett singing *Mon Homme* [My Man] could hardly seem more distant. Yet that January, of 1932, alongside settings of Heine and Richepin, Lys's programme included Barbara's Song and the Pirate's Fiancée from the *Threepenny Opera*, which she recorded the same year, and with which she won the Grand Prix du Disque. Here, the pointed precision of address and vocal technique construct a shamelessly coy pretence of sexual transgression, a merely tangential deviance in sleeping with the man whose collar was not white, even on Sundays ... in the end the performance stands as close to conventional morality, as, say, does Mistinguett's gesture, on her return from the U.S. hitching of her skirt, so her public can see her legs again.

Meanwhile the success of the Brecht/Weill songs was sufficient to induce Weill to do two settings especially for their singer in 1934. One, *La Complainte de la Seine* [The Complaint of the Seine], represents the detritus of the river bed as an emblem of Paris, 'armes', 'larmes' [arms, tears], and slime, the inverse of glamour and the intensification of sorrow. The musician is completely at ease in a fusion of cabaret style and modern methods of composition, so that the piece is coextensive with the political cabaret of Germany and the artistic cabaret of Paris, and sounds like serious entertainment. On the cover of the sheet music, however, in full-length silk amidst the art-deco typography, Lys stretches out

13 Scott 1947.

her arms and smiles in the fantastic ecstasy of the *artiste* receiving her acclaim. It is, after all, through her professional activity that the constituent parts of music and verse, whatever their character or intent, are held together in this form of entertainment, through which Weill can make a living, as one meaning gets exchanged for another.

In September 1933, Gauty opens a new cabaret in the old Chat Noir in Montmartre, where she has the waiters got up as grooms and the orchestra in eighteenth-century costume. The site, the sometime home of the old Montmartrois avant garde of the late nineteenth century, implied a certain continuity of origins. As critics remarked it was an appropriate point of transition in the movement of a career that extends from the street to the street, through the valorising attentions of the rich, the famous, the chic. When Lys gives an interview to *Femme de France* in 1935, after she has started singing in the really big music halls, she is proud to recount that her debut, in her youth, was in singing opera arias in 'Je ne sais plus quelle boîte d'un quartier populaire' [In a forgotten dive of a crowded neighborhood]. So if she started out singing opera to the people, she was not long in singing popular songs to the rich. Her most famous hit of the '30s, 'Le Chaland qui passe' [The passing Barge], is a fantasy of fugitive love, love that embarks on the barge that slides by in the night. It is full of the imagery of 'bals musettes' and 'auberges' [country balls and inns] that most love songs of this kind have to include, but Gauty remarked that she was moved to ask for something about barges after she had seen a large number in a dock, immobilised by a strike. If the approach of some critics to these songs is right, then she was guilty of irresponsibility in turning that scene into a romance like the *Chaland*.¹⁴ But the relation of this kind of entertainment to political events is really very indistinct. Its meanings are produced within its industry and its habits, its modes of consumption and distribution, its available stock of signs and their polyvalence. The workings of entertainment are so routine as to be almost invisible. And it is with this that we are concerned, not with the economic crisis, even in the recording industry. As Jean Sablon, Mireille and Lucienne Boyer all remark, they just sang on and on.¹⁵ The presence of the mutual aid societies of intellectual workers, musicians, and entertainers organised to assist the unemployed had no impact on this, and to pretend that they did would prevent us from seeing something of how things did work. (Equally, political music is a different social formation,

14 Claude Fléouter and Robert Manthoulis, *La France des années trente*, seen in videotape at the Bibliothèque Publique d'Information, Paris; Coulanges 1969.

15 In Fléouter and Manthoulis – see note 12 above.

not an alternative form of music.) In October 1936, *Voilà* magazine ran an article on freshwater sailors, with a full-cover illustration and a full-page spread inside. It was inspired by the Chaland, and the reporter went for a meal with a family of bargees. This barge is not the site of a murder by Simenon, but of domestic bliss. After lunch the wife sings, Le Chaland, of course. The old bargee remarks:

... A beautiful song, said the old man. A beautiful song, but the one who wrote it didn't know that one never sails on a river between sunset and dawn. But a beautiful song anyway!

Well, he seems to have understood that in this case, at least, realism is only a relation.

Moment 3

Entre Saint-Ouen et Clignancourt
 Je suis rev' nue hier faire un tour
 Sur la zone
 Quel changement alors j' ai trouvé
 On démolit de tous côtés
 Quel Cyclone
 Plus d' bosquets, plus d' baraq's en bois
 Plus d' ces chansons qu' étaient pour moi
 Une aumône
 Et devant mes souv' nirs détruits
 Tout' seul' j' ai pleuré dans la nuit
 Sur la zone

Aubret/Sablon, Salabert, 1933¹⁶

[Between Saint-Ouen and Clignancourt / I came back yesterday for a little stroll / On the zone / What changes I found then! / Things are torn down on all sides / What a Cyclone! / No more shrubs, no more wooden shanties / No more songs which were for me / Alms / And in front of my destroyed memories / All alone I cried in the night / On the zone]

16 Cited from the original 1933 text, published in the sleeve of Edith Piaf, *C'était un jour de fête* (Philips).



FIGURE 36 From Voilà, weekly pictorial magazine, October, 1936

Such a song is not intended to be addressed to the people of the zone. Rather, it is a message from the zone, frankly cynical and sentimental at the same time. Sentimental, because of the past that it regrets, cynical in that the performer who sings it is an escapee from the zone. The lure of the zone is its history. It came into being as the area around the fortifications of Paris on

which nothing could be built. But just because nothing official could be built, everything unofficial was. To come from the zone was to come literally and metaphorically from the periphery.

J'ai vendu des fleurs aux terrasses
 Quand j'avais dix-sept ans,
 Mais la roue tourne, le temps passé
 j'ai du fric à present

[I sold flowers at the terraces / When I was seventeen, / But the wheel
 turns, time passes / and now I have money]

It is the reality of demolition that permits the realities of the zone to be transmuted into nostalgia as the song offers the outer city slum as the object of unnameable desires, as a geographical space that can be reached in a métro ride, but which is as far away as the past. A photograph of the late '30s, taken about the same time that the Môme Piaf recorded a rather softened version of this text, shows a young man kneeling to sort through a miserable display of second-hand books on the pavement of Saint-Ouen. He wears a large old coat, and has something of the look of a First World War poet, and his interest in the books sets him far apart from the old stallholder slumped in front of him in a chair. The young man's fingers are pale and long, clean and work-free, in the background there are other people, who might be businessmen or just men with briefcases. It is what we would expect of the zone at Saint-Ouen, not a confusion of social types, but certainly a mixture of different intentions, different needs and different uses, all in one way or another dependent on the detritus thrown up and out by the city. In another photo a young man in a double-breasted suit and a shabby borsalino pushes up to a stall to look at an eiderdown. About eight people seem to be watching him closely from the crowd, as if something important might take place, or as if there were nothing else to watch. In a rather different view of the market at the Porte de Montreuil, an old lady scrabbles through a heap of rubbish on the pavement; it is not possible to see what there is, except that it cannot be very desirable to us. To her right are the vast terrains of the zone, and behind her rises a dark wall of '20s 'Habitations à bon marché' [Low-income housing], built on the line of the old fortifications. She is curiously less defined than the rubble and the rubbish, but sifting through the scrapyards of the zone is an activity that defines a person and their relation to the city, to its past, and to its present. Perhaps, as slumming in the zone became more and more popular for the middle and upper middle classes in the '20s and '30s, as knowing

'zonards' by character and by name became a kind of sign of social grace, these images are the kinds of histories that the slummers were looking for.¹⁷ In the markets of the zone, you might find either the rubbish or the antiques that you threw out or sold only the day before, processed, repossessed, or you might consume someone else's shards. And, among these shards are the characters, the old, the dispossessed, the proprietors of the 'guinguettes' or their dancers, the French fries and the lilacs. All these are part of the mythic history of the city, living in its present, the residual evidence for myths that arise out of the processes of economic and social changes, and recompositions of urban life.

So, over a number of years, the zone, as the stake at the centre of different political and economic situations, remains important to the definition of Paris and its streets. Its representation draws on already existing stocks of imagery, reinforces and adds to them. For example, the 'fille des fortifs' [prostitute of the fortifications], who, by the '30s, is a dying phenomenon anyway, circulates as a trope alongside the fille of Sébastopol or of the Rue Pigalle, to merge into a single vertical and horizontal stratification of the city – a taxonomy of social relations that extends from the street to the seventh floor and from Saint Lazare to the suburbs.¹⁸ Below society, or at its edges, this life must be spoken through the appearance of its own self-expressiveness, or through the mediation of some person who appears to have wandered through these social spaces, across their barriers and through their experiences, or some person who handles the signs of having accomplished such a movement – perhaps a singer. And what it is to be such a person, is also to have the real knowledge of the unnameable desires.

In 'Saint-Ouen et Clignancourt', the singer also deals with sex on the zone.

A mon avis les gens du monde
 Ne s'av'nt pas fair'l'amour
 Au moment critique ils abondent
 En bobards, en discours
 Alors cell's qui comm'moi connaissent
 C'que c'est qu'un mâle, un vrai,

17 See, for example, Aressy and Parménie 1943; MacOrlan 1948 (with engravings by P. Lagache); Warnod 1927 (with lithos by S.H. Moreau). ('Fortifs', from the title of the Warnod, is a diminutive for fortifications).

18 For the overall questions of the 'fille', the historical development of prostitution, see Corbin 1979. I have used the word 'fille' in an ambiguous way, to denote both a professional prostitute and a woman who might just be seen as being close to that.

Cell's là s' dis' nt: un mec, en vitesse
Et je me rattraperai

[In my opinion society people / Don't know how to make love / At the crucial moment they are glib / With tall tales, with speeches / So those who, like me, know / What a man is, a real one / Those say: a man quick / And I'll make it up]

Here the address of the singer to the audience of the well-heeled club merges with a relation of the singer with the song, as the representative of its meaning as well as the messenger. In the case of a performer like the Môme Piaf, especially, the intrusion of the *fille* into the club is literally an instance of a social movement on the one hand, and the acquisition of its history by the audience on the other. To arrive in the Champs-Élysées, and to inform its public that they don't know what sex really is unless they've had it rough in the zone, is to flaunt an exotic sexuality as more than real, and, also, to fantasise a possible relationship with the boy, or the girl of the street. But if the insult to 'les gens du monde' [society people] or 'de la haute' is essential to the appeal of the song, it can also, with the singer's history, subtend a different articulation to a popular audience, who can read it as an insult made on their behalf, an expression of the relation of rich and poor, a widening of the gap in favour of the poor. In the music hall this must have been an element of Mistinguett's satin-covered vulgarity, that dressed up the 'common' to banalise wealth, yet made just a spectacle of the often rather anti-bourgeois, slangy lyrics that were written for her. And, like Piaf, Mistinguett was a bird of Paris, 'un moineau' [a sparrow], who struts the pavement and the stage, across and up and down the strata of urban civilisation.

Legality, Health, and Song

All those interested in the good repute, hygiene and beauty of Paris would like to see the disappearance of this seedy belt called the 'Zone.' Upon entering Paris, one's eyes are irresistibly drawn to this corner, disinherited above all others, and leaving an indelible impression upon many. One's heart contracts at the thought of these thousands of people who, close to so many commodities, live in slums without running water, without light, at the mercy of the elements and all ills.¹⁹

19 See Brisset 1933. The zone had been the subject of replanning for transport, garden cities, etc., for over thirty years. E.g., see Péreire 1901.

Brisset's thesis was not intended as anything other than an attempt to sort out the complex laws of exploitation affecting the zone after the decision of 1919 to demolish the fortifications, and the general development plan of 1924. Nonetheless it seemed right to begin with a moving account of the terrible conditions of life that existed there. Mortality statistics for the Parisian region from 1901 to 1933, drawn up for the minister of public health in the Popular Front governments, Henri Sellier – himself a long-standing advocate of social housing – present a grim account of life outside the twenty arrondissements.²⁰ If the figures for almost all forms of mortality for all ages were already poor in the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth arrondissements, the most working-class areas of the city, they shoot up as you move across into the zone and beyond. For the age group 20–39, for example, in the eighteenth, violent deaths run at 2.4 per 1000, as an annual average, while across the walls in Saint-Ouen it is 4. In the same movement, suicides go up from 1.7 to 2.2, and for the age group 40–59, cirrhosis rises from 5.4 to 11.2 and pulmonary tuberculosis from 30.4 to 46.5, this last 9 in excess of the rate for the same disease in the thirteenth. In comparison with a working-class suburb like Kremlin-Bicêtre, 220.8, it is low. We do not want to enter into a discussion on the way Dr. Ichok put these figures together, or how they entered into the urban politic of the Blum government, only to indicate that they form part of the representation of the city, and tell us something about those areas that were particularly preponderant in its mythology of place. Photographs of the zone sometimes show something more like the content of the songs. In a series by René Jacques of 1939, the streets of the fleamarket of Saint-Ouen are empty but promising, while another series of the Seeberger Brothers, made this time as the German authorities were about to demolish the 'barraques' in 1943, shows the gardens and trellises of what was, after all, the nearest open space to Paris. It is possible to imagine in these, at least a dream of poverty and freedom, of cheap shops and dance halls, lilacs and French fries. So, the alcoholism, the tuberculosis, the murders, and the trash are only a part of life there.

However, looking at the worst areas in Dr. Ichok's report, both inside and outside the city, the names of the areas read off like a list of the titles of Aristide Bruant's songs, in the period of his success at the Mirliton after 1885. Belleville-Ménilmontant, A Montrouge, A la Roquette, A la Bastille, and so on. It was from Montmartre that Bruant indulged his endlessly repetitive sentimentalisms of a wholly lumpen image of popular life, in which each sign of 'deprivation' or

20 Ichok 1937.

'marginality', like illegitimacy or prostitution, is taken as a signifier of social class. And it was in his club that the bourgeois smarted under his supposed insults and rubbed shoulders with the fille. Yet there is more than a little irony in the double meaning of the 'à' in his titles, for it is always possible to read it as 'to' rather than 'at', the indicator of an imaginary journey, not of a social position, in which the singer conveys a knowledge that he does not want, and, maybe, does not really have. In Bruant we can see already that ruthless classification by type and place that leads Louis Chevalier to those refined differentiations that repress the origins, production, and meaning of social difference. If the zone and the poor quartier are fetishes in the litany of entertainment and of a certain type of literary culture, it is not unrelated to an attitude toward the fate of the urban poor and working class, to their history and to their future. But, as we have suggested, with *Saint-Ouen et Clignancourt*, through the image of the singer, and a two-faced working of the song, the song can multiply its value as the account of an actual as well as a nostalgic loss. In some of those recorded by Fréhel in the '30s, 'Où est-il done' [But where is he?], 'Tout change dans la vie' [Everything in life changes], or 'La Chanson des fortifs' [The Song of the fortifications], the memory of the city and the zone as popular are woven together. In 'Où est-il done', the saddened reminiscing of a Parisian emigrant to New York comes to stand in for the transformation of the city itself, his memory of the 'bistrot du coin', the 'bal musette' and the 'frites' becomes a lament for the demolition of 'nos vieilles maisons' and the building of banks on the wastelands of the Butte. 'Tout change' (written for the film 'Gigolette'), sings of the crumbling 'barraques' (huts) on the zone overlooking the bleach factory, and of poverty and domestic misery. To console herself for the view, the singer sticks up postcards of the Côte d'Azur, while to forget her brutal man, she looks at one of Maurice Chevalier – 'tout change dans la vie, avec un peu d'imagination' [everything changes in life with a little imagination]. Now, the misery of life on the zone is pictured in a comic version of Dr. Ichok's statistics, but if it can be changed by a simple act of imagination it is in reality imaginary, and can pass into nostalgia. In 'La Chanson des fortifs', 'bâtiments à six étages / ascenseur et chauffage' [six-story buildings / elevator and heat] replace the fortifs, and as they do, the characters of Bruant's songs are translated into respectability. Bruant himself has a street named for him, the fortifs disappear, and with them the old songs and their heroes. Julot is at the Institut and Nini has a château. But if these are gone, there will always be new songs, and this song's own conclusion is the opening up of an unending reproduction of the materials of entertainment in the industries of the music hall, the nightclub, the record, and the cinema. All these songs are written by adepts of the genre, steeped in literary culture, and successful in these industries. We will come

back to this. For here the important issue is the biographical relation of the singer and the song and the way in which it holds together a number of the other relations with which we are concerned.

The Women Who Sing

In the case of the three principal 'realist' singers of the '30s, Damia and Fréhel, whose careers began before the war, and Piaf, who met with her first success in 1935, their image as a 'femme du peuple' was essential both to their representation and to the ways in which value was ascribed to their performance. That all three came from lower-class or lumpen backgrounds is rather beside the point, as the way in which their origins is repeated and anecdotalised exceeds its factual content, and itself constitutes a fully developed discourse on the nature of the popular, and on the relation of this popular to society at large. As a discourse it also forms an important element in the representation of the star as the source of the material that she (or he) sings, and so allows us to think that their relation to the entertainment industry is a voluntary, willed, and individual relation. Indeed the attribution of the meaning of the song to the singer is one of the forces that effaces the industrial nature of cultural production, and faces the consumer with a set of choices and meanings that can be made out of their personal relation with the star. Of these three, Damia is rather exceptional, as she is the only one to be seen as strong or healthy, and as essentially in control of the meaning of her songs, rather than being of it. She also played the 'Marseillaise' in Abel Gance's film *Napoleon*, which allowed some notion of a muscular, national glory to rub off on her, a notion reinforced by constant critical reference to the size of her arms. Writing in *Le Soir*, in September 1928, Renée Dunan had this to say of her, although it was well known that she lived near the Parc Monceau and had a fine country house: 'Wrested from this feminine mouth, verbal values assume a piercing and dogmatic certainty. It is the people itself speaking out', while in an interview in *Vedettes*, (December 1940), Damia had this to say of herself:

Je suis une fille de Paris. Je suis née à Paris. La pioche des démolisseurs s'est acharnée sur ma maison natale. Elle n'était pas très belle. Elle était très vieille ... Si je vous dis que mon coeur se serre chaque fois qu'il m'est donné d'aller dans ce quartier, peut-être vous me croirez. Je le fais rarement. Mes souvenirs sont bien plus beaux dans ma mémoire comme dit le poète ... Le studio où j'enregistre mes disques est dans le quartier. A chaque enregistrement mon coeur se serre. C'est mon quartier, ma toute petite patrie.

[I am a daughter of Paris. I was born in Paris. The shovel of the demolishers attacked my native house. It was not very beautiful. It was very old ... If I tell you that each time I happen to go back to this neighborhood, my heart contracts, perhaps you will believe me. I do it rarely. My memories are much more beautiful in my remembrance as the poet says ... The studio where I do my recordings is in the neighborhood. At each recording, my heart contracts. It is my neighborhood, my little homeland.]

Her words have all the hallmarks of a *plainte* on the city as they home in: 'Paris quartier', 'vieille maison', 'démolie', 'cœur qui se serre'. One of the peculiar interests in Damia is the way in which she carries these values out of the previous century. When critics write about her, it is still possible to hail her as the singer who makes the '80s live, who recycles and renovates the great social songs, like 'La Veuve' of Jules Jouy. But in an earlier interview (with André L. Daven, *Bonsoir*, April 1923), she refuses the exclusive label of 'realist', which she specifically associates with the song of the 'barrières' [gates].

Je chante ce qui est beau et j' imagine que Les Goelands, par exemple, ne sentent ni la zone ni les fortifs ... Si la triste complainte d'une fille des faubourgs s'intitule réaliste, ça n'est pas moins une histoire d'amour où la beauté trouve sa place entre un bec de gaz et un ruisseau.

[I sing what is beautiful and I imagine that the Seagulls, for example, do not smell either of the zone nor of the fortifications ... If the sad complaint of a fille of the faubourgs is called realist, it is nonetheless a love story where beauty finds its place between a gas lamp and a gutter.]

Her asserted freedom in relation to the genres of song reveals something of the way they are constructed and of the fixity of their attributes. If 'Les Goelands' was literary and 'Sur les fortifs' realist, the category of realism itself is composed of literary images, of city life, the 'bee de gaz', the stream and love. A very early review of La Môme Piaf, in the *Petit Parisien* of November 1935, makes this quite explicit:

Mais elle chante ... cette fille venue de la rue donne aux chansons de la rue la même poésie poignante, pénétrante et doucement vénéneuse que Carco à ses romans de la rue. On la sent mouillée, transie, glacée par cette bruine qui trempe l'asphalte où passent d'inquiétante silhouettes. Personne n'a exprimé l'affreuse et irremédiable détresse de la pluie dans

certains coins de Paris comme Carco ... Mais la Môme Piaf la chante aussi 'vraie' qu' elle l'a sentie ruisseler sur ses épaules maigres.

[But she sings ... this fille of the streets gives to street songs the same poignant, penetrating and sweetly venomous poetry that Carco does to her street romances. One feels her soaked, chilled, frozen by this mist which soaks the asphalt where disquieting figures pass by. No one has expressed the horrible and irremediable distress caused by rain in certain Paris corners as Carco ... But la Môme Piaf sings it as 'true' as she felt it drip on her shoulders.]

And, much later, in 1944, in *U'cho de la France*, France Roche comments on the way in which Piaf (by now Edith, no longer la Môme) puts a tradition into the first person, singing not of, but from, 'ces chambres, ces quais, ces ports, ces zincs sales, ces tonnelles rouillées' [these rooms, these riverbanks, these harbors, dirty sinks, rusty arbors], which make up the material of the realist song. The identification of the singer with the material could not be more precisely underlined, nor the way in which the literary construction of the bittersweet substance of city life is also the singer's history, as she stands in front of her chic audience at Chez Gerny's off the Champs-Élysées, or in the Salle Pleyel. We have only to open, quite randomly perhaps, a number of Paris novels from Sue or Zola to Carco or Simenon, and have only to read the first page to find ourselves faced with the wet, the foggy, the shiny, or the gleaming, the light and dark, the fine rain on the asphalt or the cobblestones and so forth. The warehouse of imagery forms an inexhaustible panorama for the bourgeois intellectual who looks out on, steps out into, but stands out of the city. The projection of the city back into the realities of cultural production, in one fantasised form or another, from Mistinguett to Damia, has all the urgency of his (sic) self-fulfillment.

These catastrophes of weather or place, out of which the writer can form a text, the 'people' must bear as a different kind of reality, and the singers, 'femmes du peuple', must at least appear to bear the marks of their subjection to them. When Fréhel returned to the stage in 1923, after years abroad and now fat and suffering from alcoholism and drug addiction, she sang not only as a representative of the material written for her, but, in another sense as its victim, as the object of a middle-class voyeurism that held her in the realm of the popular, but which also enabled her to be seen as having returned to the people. Her career had definitively moved from the small clubs to the big stages of Bobino, Scala, Eldorado, Européen, or Pépinière. In 1928 she speaks to Michel Perrin (*Rumeur*, 9 September): 'As a little girl I sang in cafés, I sang in the streets,

and my apron filled with coins, I would go home to my parents' ...' and in 1932 Gustave Fréjaville wrote of her performance at the Européen:

... on rencontre parfois des traits d'une humanité si simple, si dépouillée de littérature, comme cet aveu d'une déchirante mélancholie: 'On avait pu de notre amour / Fait autre chose.' Fréhel dit cela d'une façon si sincère, si bouleversée, qu'elle a peur de s'être trop livrée et qu' aussitôt elle éprouve le besoin de nous faire rire par quelque grasse intonation de voyou. C'est sa manière ...

[... One sometimes meets such simple human traits, so divested of literature, like this heartrending melancholy confession: 'One could have made / Something else of our love.' Fréhel says it with such upset sincerity that, afraid of having opened up too candidly, she immediately feels the need to make us laugh by a raucous bad boy intonation. It is her manner ...]

It is not exactly like speaking of an actress who assumes a role, or a number of roles, but of one who has only one role, in the enactment of which an individual trait, like a good voice or a miserable childhood, function as accessories. The page of *Voilà* devoted to Fréhel (16 May 1936) confirms her place, her true position and her fulfillment of the people's history:

Bonne grosse, Fréhel, poings aux handles, image du peuple réduisant l'histoire au quotidien et le lyrisme épuisé à la truculence; le peuple, ce 'donneur de sang' rouge comme le foulard de la blonde Fréhel.

[Good Fat Fréhel, hands on her hips, an image of the people reducing history to the everyday, and spent lyricism to truculence; the people, this 'blood donor' red as the scarf of blonde Fréhel.]

But if her life really did end in ruins, as an alcoholic, as a vegetable seller in the Rue Lepic, for Louis Chevalier this signifies no more than the fulfilment of the nature of the place on the one hand and the identification of poverty with nostalgia on the other. 'Voix de la Foire du Trône, Voix de Paris, Voix de Fréhel ...', *Voilà* seems to agree with him.

This figure of the woman of Paris who sings, however, stands at the congruence of relations of class and social power, which make and control the values and distribution of this kind of musical culture. In 'Comme un moineau' Fréhel sings the classic story of the gamine who becomes a prostitute: born in a gutter, or under a rooftop, pretty at fifteen – the first gigolo who opens his arms and

'mon amour est tombé là comme dans un piège' [my love has fallen there as into a trap]; deserted, she takes up with a 'p'tit gars désalé' [a little wise guy], who, not wanting to work, 'me vendit à d'autres' [sold me to others]. Then she sings her decline: – 'mon seul bien / ce pauvre corps que je le sens bien / déjà se lasse' [my only possession / this poor body, I feel it / is already weary], falls on the 'pavé brutal' [cruel pavement] to end up in the 'lit d'hôpital' [hospital bed]. The rhymes are crude, but the utterly deadpan rendition of their banal and inevitable sequence is rendered the more touching by their callous implication of their fatality for herself. What is touching is precisely this undefined boundary between the social destruction and self-destruction of the woman through the relations of urban life. Self-sacrifice to sex, to alcohol and to cocaine, to the limits of pleasure that break the body are the commonplace of songs like this, like 'Quand Même', and 'La Coco', all recorded by Fréhel and Piaf in the '30s. All offer the body as a victim of pleasure. Alternatively 'L'Obsédé', by two of the most famous songwriters of the period, Daniderff and Fleurigny, vents the frustration of a man at his enslavement by a woman in a sadistic fantasy that becomes one of self-destruction when it is sung by a woman. Hence their appearance in the nightclubs of the rich is, in a literal sense, a use of the working-class body for voyeuristic pleasure, and a stage in the financial valorisation of the songs that sifts them for success or failure and prepares them for the radio or for the recording industry, – for another audience.²¹ It was from the Chez Gerny's that Jacques Canetti took Piaf onto the radio and into the studios of Polydor, not from the street. At the same time, it is worth noting that, if a number of the singers themselves come from a lower-class or lumpen background, the men who write their songs rarely do so.

The Men

Leave aside the interventions in the song market of men like Sartre, Prévert, Kosma, Weill, Aragon. Jean Nohain, who, with Mireille, wrote one of the great '30s successes, 'Couchés dans le foin', was a lawyer, as were Van Parys and Xanrof; Daniderff was an orchestral conductor and Willemetz, who wrote 'Mon Homme' for Mistinguett, was a civil servant in the Ministry of the Interior. Vaucaire, producer of 'Sans lendemain' for Fréhel and 'Non je ne regrette rien' for Piaf was a journalist, radio producer and antique bookseller while Vandair, who wrote for Fréhel and Tino Rossi among others, started out as an engineer. This list is endless, though clearly many 'paroliers' and musicians also came from professional music hall backgrounds, or from 'below', like Mouloudji.

21 For an important, if brief, discussion of the gramophone, see Rancière 1978.

But it suggests a certain mingling of a stratum of amateur literati in a culture that only in some cases became their profession, and which as an activity, left their class status intact. Though they could and did become well-known, achieving, like Daniderff, a success of eccentricity or scandal, their relative occlusion behind the singers is not so much an expropriation of their role as its essence, which is to make others speak, as if in their own name. Nor, if we can take a professional literary producer, Parisian mythologiser and songwriter like Carco as symptomatic, were their views on class and sex anything other than ethnocentric. In a song, like *C'est déguelasse*, where a fille describes the messed-up face of her boxer boyfriend, Carco shows himself no stranger to the sadistic side of song culture and its cornering of women in a man's world. And his 1927 memoirs, *Du Montmartre au Quartier Latin*, are probably a useful representation of the intellectual world in which such values could be lived out.

The function of the memoirs is precisely to turn the past into literature, and, through this process, to reconcile the movement of the title, which is a movement from obscurity to fame, with the integrity of the author's own personality. The living out of a mythic avant garde of Montmartre at the turn of the century (drink, women, Utrillo), can't call its bluff without undermining the author's status. So while he changes everything else must remain fixed, and therefore anecdotal and never analysed. What we get is an image of a social group made up largely of overexcited young men and their heroes, in which women are valued as models or as prostitutes, or, in some cases, in terms of their selfless devotion to a great artist. If Carco can recall every last word of this or that poet friend, an independent woman, like Marie Laurencin, disturbs his narrative, which makes this principal distinction between Montmartre and the Latin Quarter:

Here certainly, there was a change from Montmartre where our friends were sitters and models rather than humble girls devoid of intelligence or imagination. These were a rest for us from the others. They were less intrusive, less tyrannical, and since they never lived more than fifteen or twenty days in the same place, never tried to impose. To see them regularly yielding their place to newcomers, we never had time to get to know them too well. They preserved their mystery and the life that they led away from the place where we met each other was sometimes so difficult to imagine that in spite of our blasé poses, we would feel an odd and disappointing curiosity.²²

22 Carco 1927, p. 127.

The way in which Carco and his friends consume the life of the city is first and foremost an expression of their own freedom, to look, to choose, to impose: and if their gaze in one direction turns the filles and the voyous into images and anecdotes, in another it is turned longingly on the editors and patrons who will recognise them. This is not so surprising, but it does mean that they have a large investment in the fixing of the social distances across which they pretend to move with such ease. That is to say that they are already anchored within an already established literary tradition where endless lists of rain, 'pavés', glistening lights, and fog delimit the possible meanings of popular life. In songs by Carco and others, then, a common theme is the imagining of the prostitute's life and memories, those details which could only have been known at the cost of social distance and the price of sexual equality. Here too is the basis for the constant repetition of the fantasy of the golden heart, the essential equipment of the long-suffering fille. 'Les filles qui la nuit / s'offrent au coin des rues / connaissent de belles histoires / qu'elles disent parfois / mais aux phrases crues / ... et elles croient toujours à l'amour'. ('Les Filles qui la nuit', recorded by Fréhel in 1936). [The girls who at night / offer their services on street corners / know beautiful stories / that they sometimes tell / but in crude words / ... and they still believe in love.] And here too, the fetishistic differentiation of left and right bank, of one faubourg, quartier, street or another is produced out of the abstract professionalism of the writer's gaze as he moves across the city. The differences are the content of their own freedom of movement, not, certainly, of Dr. Ichok's statistics.

Piaf

In the second part of the early stage of her career, still a chanteuse of poetic texts set to the piano, their refined diction directed at small audiences, Piaf sang 'Elle fréquentait la rue Pigalle'. It was written for her by Raymond Asso, and though his interests in prostitution might seem rather different from Carco's, the essential elements remain:

Ell' fréquentait la rue Pigalle,
 Ell'sentait l'vice à bon marché,
 Elle était tout' noir' de péchés
 Avec un pauv' visag tout pâle.
 Pourtant y' avait dans l'fond d'ses yeux,
 Comm' que' qu' chos' de miraculeux
 Qui semblait mettre un peu d'ciel bleu
 Dans celui, tout sal', de Pigalle.
 Il lui avait dit: 'vous et's belle!'

Et d'habitud', dans c'quartier-là,
 On dit jamais les chos's comm'ça
 Aux fill's qui font l'mêm' métier qu'elle.

[She hung out on rue Pigalle, / She smelled of cheap vice / She was black with sin / With a poor pale face. / Yet there was something in her eyes / Like a miracle / That seemed to put a little blue in the sky / In the very sooty sky of Pigalle. / He had said to her: 'You are beautiful!' / And usually in that neighborhood / One doesn't say things like that / To girls who ply her trade.]

And so she confesses herself to him, and they try to live a life together that cannot flower on the scenes of her old sins, 'Alors, ell' lui d'manda d'partir. / Et il l'emm'na vers Montparnasse'. [So she asked him to leave. And he took her to Montparnasse.] We are not told on which floor they lived there, but it could hardly have been the basement or the seventh, for the movement to Montparnasse is one upward through the strata of society, in literature, and in the life of cafés, bars, and clubs. All we know is that, once there, he no longer finds her as pretty, and they go their own ways again, she 'là-haut' [up there] to her dirty pavement, there to weep, whenever a joyous pair passes by. The tone is more tearful, more social than Carco's version of the same journey, but it is clear who may or may not make it, and who should stay in their place. Yet it is the singer herself who proves the exception to the rule, and it is her escape that renews the authenticity of the imagery of the zone, the faubourg, the street, the seventh floor, where, like the zone, sex is truer than on the bourgeois first, and of the broken-down prostitutes of the 'purée', – the banks of Canal St. Martin and the Boulevard de Sébastopol. Critics who acclaimed Piaf's renewal of the repertory of French Song were hearing a new voice rather than new themes, a reidentification of the singer and the words. It is one of the ironies of this culture, so built on the idea of evocation, that its effect is exactly opposite. It names only its own parts, time and time and time again.

Writing of a different question, that is the inadequacy of the connotative value of old systems of landscape representation to new subjects, Griselda Pollock describes a breakdown of connotation into denotation, and the parallel is useful.²³ The system of imaging that concerns us is also threatened with

23 '... But how could one arrive at an equivalently potent (to words) evocation by means of graphic signs of denotation that were being stripped of their traditional connotations by current social processes?' (Pollock 1983).

a collapse of its adequacy – that is, in relation to the viability of a store of tropes whose compositional elements may be vanishing or changing too fast or too radically for them to survive with anything like a general cultural value. But it is here, that, within limits, nostalgia can hold together voyeurism, pity, or a sense of loss within some common limits. And, an intensification in the vagueness of the images, that we find in some wartime and post-war songs of Piaf, their universalisation into the most general notions of love and city, helps to perpetuate viability, if at the loss of literary precision. It is the extreme development of such a process in present-day Parisian nostalgia, of the old Halles in the new pavilions, for instance, that renders it eclectic and ridiculous. The new scale of capital transformation can only contain the *petit-bourgeois* ideal as kitsch. Be that as it may, in 1935, the renewal of the social movement of the singer ‘fille’ could quite specifically, freshen and vary the connotative charge of the imagery. So with Piaf, the particular conditions of her emergence as a star, and the events surrounding it, make it possible to see her as a phenomenon at the centre of a variation of the relations between sex, class, and crime, in which the gap between biography and representation is narrowed so as to render it interestingly dangerous. She sings, ‘son visage tourmenté par les belles douleurs des chansons de rues’ [Her face ravaged by the sweet sorrows of street songs].²⁴

In her famous *Voilà* cover spread of 1939, only just over four years after her debut, Montmartre can barely contain her (Figure 37). The huge outline of Sacré-Coeur is no more than a ghost, while the not-so-distant figure of another woman barely comes up to her knee. The pavé glistens and the walls peel. Her gaze projects the whole image over the viewer, but without meeting his or hers. She is the name for some otherwise (unnameable) tragedy of Paris. When, in 1935, the wealthy nightclub owner Louis Leplée took her from street singing to his boîte, she was, for what it was worth, already known as a singer of the streets. Naturally at Chez Gerny’s she sang those songs of the ‘filles de la purée’ [girls of mashed potato], already carefully fashioned by the professional songwriters, and the audience liked it. They liked her misery and unease, and her modern biographers like to comment on how her ‘real’ talent won through. They also tell us how Leplée was shot dead in bed in April 1936, a year after he launched her; how the police suspected her for her contacts with the ‘titis’ and small-time crooks who were her lovers and her friends, and harassed her until they could find no lead. This resulted in months of isolation and rejection, catcalling at her performances, so that only Raymond Asso, who wrote new songs for her and taught her to sing better, and Jacques Canetti, who put her on the radio,

24 *Paris qui chante*, October, 1938.

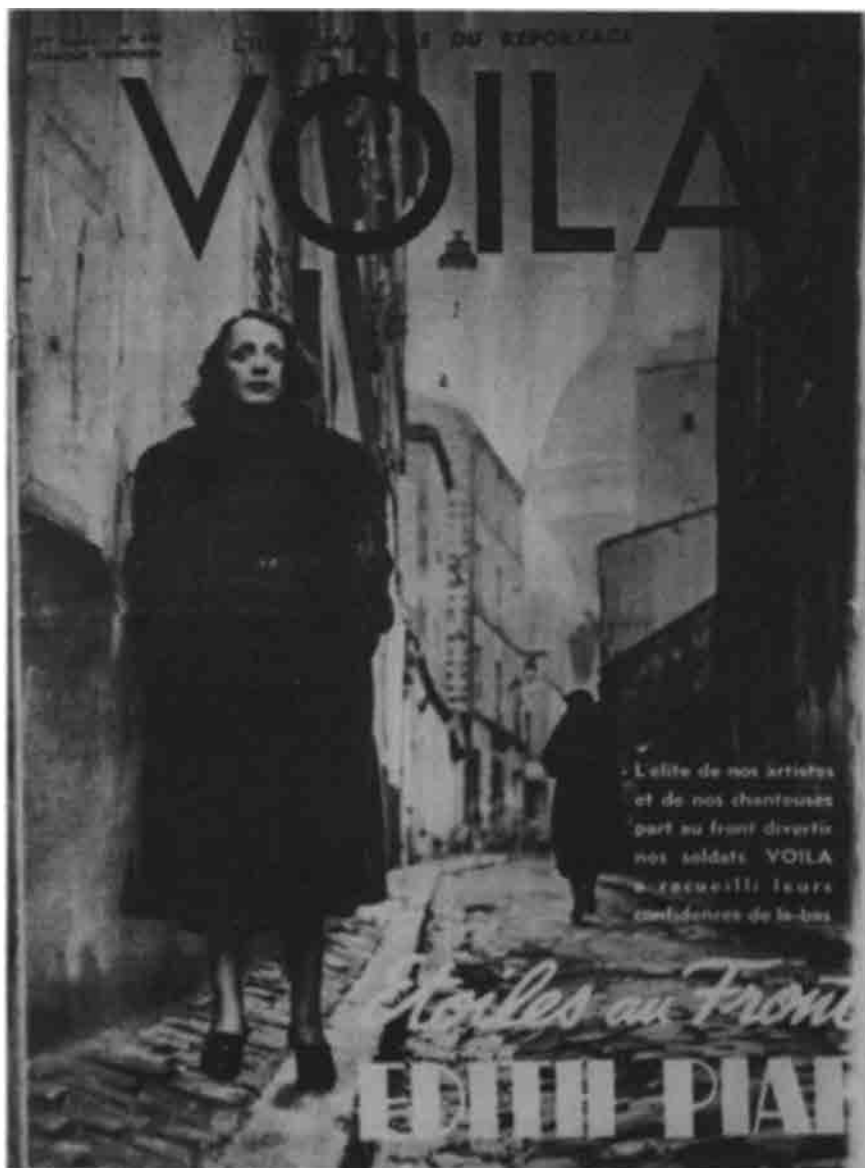


FIGURE 37 *The cover of Voila, 10 November 1939*

stood by and saved her to win through again. But looked at rather differently this affair was essential to her, for it was already predicated in the culture of the songs. Not, as Chevalier would argue, as their ‘real’ meaning, but in the sense of their needing to appear that this life is what they are about. In one aspect, the fille can be crucified again, while, in another, she can be made to stand in for

those realities of which everyday life entertainment acts as the unconscious. (This is normal in the handling of women's images in representations on the borderline of scandal and amusement.) A song of Gauty's puns on place and fate in its story of the murder of a fille, 'Boulevard des Filles du Calvaire, Calvaire des filles du boulevard ...' [Boulevard of the daughters of Calvary, Calvary of the streetwomen.]

In *Voilà's* coverage of Piaf after the killing of Leplée her relation to Paris is more subordinate than it was to be in 1939, produced more within the specific context of the low life (Figure 38). At the top, the sparrows for which Leplée had named her, and a vignette of her at his funeral. Below, the 'titi' she loves at the moment – the 'petit homme' she invites to breakfast with the reporter. Then below, the ever-present accordion, which defines the music of the people, and her image as a street singer. To the left the Place du Tertre and the dome of Sacré-Coeur this time defined, as if she still has more need of it than it of her. In the text, Montarron explains how Leplée put her unchanged on the stage, 'She sang her roaming life of môme of the bell, of street urchin. And Leplée, each evening would listen to her profoundly moved, his eyes wet with tears and would hug her in his arms when she had finished' – and this in front of his audience in their tuxedos and evening dresses. It is with ease that Montarron slips in the phrase 'môme de la cloche' as if it were a sociological fact, when it was the title of a song composed by Scotto, and the first she sang at Gerny's. It was a hit of the day. The stories that surround this debut become the content of her life as they pass from one journalist or biographer to the others, and enter her own memoirs as the seal of their authenticity. Variations on them abound like talmudic readings, but their fundamental structure is not touched – the triumph of the street.

Yet the merest possibility of seeing Leplée's patronage of her as a source of his death opened up the possibility of Piaf connoting two other obsessions of bourgeois popular culture. First, and, especially after the Stavisky affair, the lurking criminality beneath the tuxedos and evening dresses, illustrations of which *Déetective* regularly preferred. And, second, was the lurking of men's bodies beneath the evening dresses (Figure 39). For *Déetective* Leplée's death was more a moment in its own shady 'rapportages' [snitching] about homosexuality as the site of violence, exploitation and crime between classes than it was a moment in Piaf's career. Leplée's relation with her appears as one of sexual competition, and his death is seen as the inevitable consequence of his own lonely search for exotic and illicit pleasure. This is why, for *Déetective*, she could not have been implicated. So, the great drag balls at the Magic City, quite open and well-known events, are fantasised as the context of the murder, and, just as Piaf's songs precede her, so does Leplée's death precede him, regard-

FIGURE 38 *From Voilà, 18 April 1936*

less of exactly how he lived his life. It exists in the narratives of deviance. At the same time another axis or trajectory of the city is revealed in which the tropes of gleaming darkness now play their part in another sexual story



FIGURE 39 *From Détective*, 16 April 1936

(Figure 40). Reports on the apparent murder, or death through pleasure, of a young man, Léon Lijour (Figures 41, 42) and on male prostitution not only illustrate this trajectory, but the construction of their pages shares something with the narrative forms of songs. Each object of the fantasy is named, placed, and catalogued. And, it is in magazines like these that writers of Carco's circles, such as MacOrlan, also find their outlets in producing the exoticism of the secret and the illicit. Or, as was the case with Carco's buddy André Warnod, in the seedier still pages of *Paris Sex Appeal*.

So we can suppose that the particularity of Piaf's biographical conjuncture with the French song was that it endowed its naming lists with some fresh, if unspoken, connotation. In the scriptural biographies it is usually assumed that the subject of the song 'Mon Légionnaire', written by Asso and Marguerite Monnot, first recorded by Marie Dubas, but made a hit by Piaf, is a part of Piaf's life. A youthful passion:

Il avait de grands yeux très clairs
 Où parfois passaient des éclairs
 Comme au ciel passent les orages.
 Il était plein de tatouages
 Que j'ai jamais très bien compris.
 Son cou portait: 'Pas vu, pas pris.'



FIGURE 40 From *Détective*, 16 April 1936

Sur son coeur on lisait: 'Personne.'
 Sur son bras droit, un mot: 'Raisonne.'
 J'sais pas son nom, je n' sais rien d' lui,
 Il m' a aimée toute la nuit
 Mon Légionnaire.

[He had big very light eyes / Where sometimes lightning would flare up /
 As in the sky storms sometimes flare up. / He was full of tattoos / Which
 I never understood very well. / On his neck was inscribed: 'Not seen, not
 taken.' / On his heart would be read: 'Nobody.' / On his right arm, one word:
 'Figure it out.' / I don't know his name, I know nothing about him, / He
 loved me the whole long night / My Légionnaire.]

In terms of contemporary texts there seems to be little reason to credit this memory of hers, and the reasons why the enormously famous Dubas should not have had a hit are hard to see. Yet looking at Asso's poems, which he published after the war as *Chansons sans musique* (1946), his desire to distance them from their performance by Piaf, whose grand orchestral style he had rejected, makes their meaning more evident. Some are addressed to legionnaires or colonial



FIGURE 41 From Détective, 10 January 1935



FIGURE 42 From *Détective*, 10 May 1934

soldiers, dwelling on the beauties of scars, tattoos, and superior strength; one is a parody of gangster violence (Browning), another the account of a meeting with a stranger on a night train (Paris-Méditerranée). A good number celebrate that most inevitably fleeting of all lovers, the sailor, whose body and welfare at this point was as much the stake of the conflicting discourses of erotic fantasy and social reform as was the zone itself.²⁵ If Asso gives a specifically social meaning to the layout of his book, and concerns himself with issues of peace and justice, the main poems that formed the bulk of Piaf's early hits have all the current literary and urban codings of homosexual desire – codings that shift from the pages of *Détective* to the drawings of Cocteau or the memoirs of Daniel Guérin. Sung by the 'fille des rues', whose voyou companions might have been her patron's lover/killers, this desire becomes their illicit meaning. What could be accepted, barely and with scandal, at the Bal Magic City, or in the semi-clandestinity of the *bals mixtes* of the Rue de Lappe, acquires in these songs

25 The way in which urban culture consumes the sailor as a lover is analogous to the way it consumes the working-class woman as fille. As such, the sailor can be read as the equivalent male sign to the fille.

the perfect clandestinity that allows it to circulate with ease. It does not seem so strange that, coming from the lips of Marie Dubas, a 'disease' [storyteller] much loved by children, they should resonate less richly than from the mouth of a woman who had just emerged at such an intersection of the fantasies and realities of crime and sex. In the plain, everyday normality of the worn-out imagery, through the daily repetitions of the entertainment industries, the song can still multiply its uses. This is what we mean when we say that the everyday acts as the unconscious of other realities, normalising meanings of poverty, dispossession or sexuality outside the realm of scandal: for scandal calls on regulation or retribution. It is hard to know at what point this power to turn denoting and connoting the one into the other, is a freedom and at what point a stranglehold. Carmen is avenged, not through the success of the opera, but through the gramophone. Her message becomes the commonplace of (polite) society.

Part Three

It has not been my intention in this piece to replicate the highly conservative cultural pessimism of Adorno in his essay on fetishism and popular music.²⁶ Nor, indeed, to approach its more current manifestation in the work of Baudrillard,²⁷ who has seriously misunderstood his central thesis on the self-referentiality of signs by attaching it mainly to contemporary culture. The values of different 'levels' of culture are not discontinuous even though, on the one hand, their nature as a site of conflict over meaning is never fixed, and, on the other, the tools and methods for demonstrating their relation are by no means fully established. Kiki de Montparnasse seems to have had a rather good grasp of the problem. Researching into the nature of urban pleasure in *Les Amuseurs de Paris*, Maurice Verne, in his imagination at least, interviews many of those singers we have written about, and other figures of Parisian nightlife. (Kiki reminds us of Brassai's secret Paris, which has been absent from our text, and it is well to recall his contribution to our conventions of representation at this point.) Kiki, chatting to him of her life as a model to all the Montparnasse artists of her day, Man Ray, Foujita, Kisling, and *tutti quanti*, has this to say: '... C'est pas donné à tout le monde, (blague Kiki), je s'rais une môme de musée, comme la joconde'. [Not everyone can swing it (Kiki kids around), I'll be a

26 Adorno 1985.

27 Baudrillard 1981.

museum gal, like the Mona Lisa.] The paintings are perhaps like the songs she sings in smoky dens:

Encore un baiser veux tu bien
Un baiser qui n'engage à rien
Sans qu'on se touche.

[Another kiss, are you game? / A kiss that leads nowhere / Without our touching.]

That is, they do not engage in the conventionality of the social relations that produce them, and of which they are signs of affirmation. They are seen only as signs of their purely artistic intention. The museum turns the fille into the Mona Lisa.

Moment 4

Lucienne Boyer saw things less clearly. The most outstanding woman exponent of the 'chanson de charme', her submission to the need for love is but rarely touched by the most attenuated irony. But at a meeting of women, a feminist meeting, in support of the Popular Front election campaign, she is reported as speaking like this: 'Mme Lucienne Boyer who has succeeded in spreading French song throughout the world has seen almost everywhere women endowed with the same status as men. She wonders why French women are considered at home inferior to Turkish or Chinese women in their countries'.²⁸ The refusal of submission in social and political rights does not seem to pose a question about submission in the song.

The same question set for an exam might read like this: 'Did Sartre's songs for Juliette Greco make it more or less necessary for Simone de Beauvoir to write the *Second Sex*, and what did this have to do with the evocation of city streets? Discuss in relation to Sartre's own comments on the hit parade in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*'.²⁹

Postscript

The last photo (Figure 43) was a rather conscience-stricken attempt to put the first to rights. The concept of the Bellevillois has been so inseparable from the history of the Parisian working class since the election campaign of 1869, when

²⁸ *Illustration*, 2 May 1936.

²⁹ de Beauvoir 1968; Sartre 1976.



FIGURE 43 Old shop signs, rue de Ménilmontant, Paris XX^e, 1984. André Marty hid here.

Gambetta won on the Belleville platform, that shooting these old shop signs seemed fair enough. The Rue de Ménilmontant is only waiting for Chirac to clean it up, to build new heated cabins for the police, and then to glorify it in that most right-wing of city magazines, *Ville de Paris*. (On its cover the 'i' of Paris dotted by a little ship scheme with a red and blue sail.) So it seemed worthwhile to preserve this relic of a bygone era of popular consumerism. It's also only a stone's throw from the last barricades of the Commune, including the one where Jean Baptiste Clément saw the ambulance girl to whom he dedicated his song 'Le Temps des cerises', thus forging definitively the relation of the red blood of pleasure and revolution on the streets of working-class Paris. The whole area connotes. But this attempt also went wrong. Puffing up the hill with his shopping, a very old man asked me what I was trying to photograph. 'The old signs'. He seemed surprised, then sorry. 'Mais il y avait quelque chose de plus important là, et on n'y mettra jamais une enseigne pour ça'. [But there was something more important there, and a sign will never be put up for that.]

The old man had known André Marty from his youth, and at the time he had mutinied his ship during the allied intervention against Bolshevik Russia. It was in this building that Marty had lived clandestinely, and for the old man it was a sign of all their struggles of the '20s and '30s. He did not know if this history had been written up. Certainly, he was not an habitué of the library at 'Sciences Po'. But he wanted it passed on.

Parvenu or Palimpsest: Some Tracings of the Jew in Modern France*

The Jew, it has to be admitted, is only one among many visions of alterity that frame the special illusion of a self we give the name of 'nation'. Whether a nation is the victim or a conqueror, whether it emerged over a long historical period or as an effect of a short war of liberation, its history will be, in part, an assemblage of texts that articulate never having been with being, origin with temporariness, annihilation with persistence. Conquering or being conquered alike deposit the violent archaeology of a fragile and unstable identity, which is made out of nothing if not effacements, now of self and now of other, in a complex, unfinished reinvention. 'France' is one such palimpsest, 'Israel' another. Matching the Emperor Napoleon to Charlemagne in 1806, for example, placed the very name of France at risk, in its elision of the recent revolutionary past. Just as, in another timescale, the modern state of Israel might be thought to undermine the all-important myth of origin for diasporic Judaism that was the destruction of the Second Temple, which is also the founding myth of the Jew's place in the Western world. If Jew and France alike are palimpsests, then their writing over of each other might be thought of as a paradigm of the ways in which this 'one among many' others of the Western 'I' is, after all, a crucial figure.

The idea of a writing and a showing through, a doing and an undoing that amount to an involuntary assimilation in the very process of demarcating self from other, suggests how 'other' is not necessarily illuminating as a concept.¹ For 'other', in even the subtlest of its gradations, normally asks for a line that will be neat – even though the reason why the line is drawn may not be clear and though what lies on either side of it be not clearly different. On the contrary, it is bound to be overdetermined. The same line may be drawn around more than just one 'other' – something all too often forgotten in the articulation of the 'being-other' that is being a Jew. The other and not-other are 'always and

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* Images have been omitted from this chapter.

1 For an immense range of materials see Said 1978; Vernant 1990; Bhabha 1990.

already' in each other's presence with all the difficulty of knowing what it is, this self made out of presence and of lack. This lack is a blank space or an unreadable text, waiting to be written on or over, to be filled out or corrected with a history that will name it, matching the desire to know for sure.

This puts me in mind of an exhibition of Hebrew manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in 1991. In one showcase there was a Lithuanian manuscript of the seventeenth century, whose caption explained that such items were extremely rare because, generally speaking, they were destroyed along with their Jews in major pogroms. The lettering was a dirty grey, steep and exaggerated, spiky, grim, and without grace. It was more like a defensive picket than an invitation to study or prayer, a limit around communication rather than an opening out. A way of being Jewish in its gestures as in its meanings. Its contrast with some Italian medieval manuscripts was as stark as its calligraphy: from thorny rigour to sweetness and light, from cruel scratchings to delicate cursions. But these Italian manuscripts had also been cruelly scratched and whitened in entire blocks. Passages from Maimonides or commentaries on the psalms, for example, that could not in that irremediably Jewish version be read as confirming Christian theology, had been removed under the Counter-Reformation. The text is preserved as a precious and religious object while erasing its embarrassing specificity. As the social philosopher Zygmunt Bauman has pointed out, the Jewish refusal of Christianity forces the latter to these elaborate stratagems both to assert and renounce its origins, here with a double gesture of elimination and retouching.² To establish something of the normality and the particularity of this cultural process, I shall range across a few of the richly overwritten figurations of the Jew in modern France, thinking through some of the ways in which the two words 'Jew' and 'France' cannot be written without each other, yet ever at the threat of each other's effacement. If I use the word 'figure' rather than 'image', then this is, as we will see, because we are coping with the very structures of utterance, and not with some more or less pretty pictures.

Henri Murger, the Parisian writer who more than any other codified the romance of artistic bohemia, badly needed such a figure. In his *Scènes de la vie de bohème* (1851), the painter Marcel sells a canvas, 'Crossing of the Red Sea', to the rascally dealer 'Médicis' – the bohemians' name for the Jew Salomon, who works 'in all forms of bric-à-brac'.³ Médicis/Salomon is a complex character, far

² Bauman 1994. See Garel 1991, items 100 and 115.

³ Henri Murger, *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, 1845–1851, collected and published by both Hetzel and Michel Lévy, Paris, 1851. These quotations and all page references from the Folio edition (Murger 1988). All translations from the French are mine.

more so than the bohemians themselves, who conform to one of those simple typologies that were a currency of journalistic entertainment throughout the July Monarchy. Unlike the bohemians, he is as much a social mechanism as an individual type. His trade can be confined neither to a specialised and restricted range of things nor well-delimited commercial spaces. He will as readily buy or sell an idea as an old shoe, exchanging 'cigars for the plan of a serial novel, slippers for a sonnet, fresh fish for a paradox'.⁴ He 'works in the ideal', Murger remarks, and in his head he holds the whole structure of social relations in the city, the addresses of anyone who matters or who can fix. He can get a play put on or a favour extended. Murger gives us two pages of extracts from his account books, of which a selection reads like this:

Bought from M. V ..., journalist, the complete works, uncut, of M.***, member of the Académie, 10fr.

Sold to same a critical article on the works of M.***, member of the Académie, 30fr.

Bought from the little D ... her hair, 15fr.

Bought from M. B ... a lot of scandalous articles and the last three spelling mistakes made by the Prefect of the Seine, 6fr., plus a pair of Neapolitan shoes.

Sold to mademoiselle O ... a blond hair-do, 20 fr.

Indicated to M. Ferdinand the time at which the Baronne R ... de P ... goes to mass. Rented to the same for one day, the little entresol of the faubourg Montmartre, the lot for 30fr.⁵

Utterly protean, then, is this figure of Salomon the Jew, exceeding the stereotype of the grasping, rasping moneybags that is his superficial form. For what we see in him is the pure and abstract production and movement of profit, reified profit, freed from any sullyng relation to the extraction of the surplus value of labour, distanced from the common world of labour as from the ownership of the means of production. As in Marx, capital's substance and superego alike are Jew.⁶ And the profit exacted in each of this Jew's transactions at one and the same time facilitates the ensemble of social relations and condenses a fantastic image of a society's unconscious weavings of unities and fragments. The doings of Salomon the Jew flow out into every narrative of city life, an image

⁴ Murger 1988, p. 247.

⁵ Murger 1988, pp. 248–9.

⁶ See 'On the Jewish Question', Marx 1975.

of complex, urban porosity satisfying in its poetic grotesqueness. As much an armature of the city's mythic shape was the *Spleen* (1869) of Baudelaire, which itself could not exist without the trade in poems. Salomon's manoeuvring, like the installments of the serial novel, activate relations of individual desire with the unpredictable narratives of city life. When Marcel goes out hoping to see his painting at a distinguished exhibition, as he has been promised, he chances on it only in another, unexpected episode of its being. It is hanging outside a food shop. A steamboat has now been added to it and it is retired 'At the Port of Marseille'. Clearly, Murger's Jew is hardly sentimental about the biblical theme of his own deliverance from Egypt. The scene becomes folklorically French. The present of cash is more immediate than the theologies of Jewish memory. When Médicis sits to deal with Marcel, his pockets rattle with gold; when Marcel agrees to the deal in cash, Médicis rattles the 'orchestra of his purses'.⁷ This Jew is a creator, a creator of conjunctions and chance encounters. And yet this Jew, even as he creates, edges out the true artist, who now lives through him, by procurement. He feeds the bohemians' bellies, starves their ambition. His contemporary homologue is the fully anti-semitised social type of Richard Wagner's Judaism in Music, the Halévy and the Meyerbeer who snip out their scores like financial coupons and force the authentic musician off the stage.⁸

The Jew Salomon is one of those isolated individuals who belongs, as a matter of common definition, to what was called the 'bohemia of work;' but not to the bohemia of the soul. Maybe the two are incompatible because of the intervention of the word Jew. Jews are not inevitably represented as second-hand or wheelerdealers, yet to class a dealer as a Jew is to class that dealing as abject and irredeemable. Turned into a 'sociological' description in Maxime Du Camp's *Paris, ses organes, ses fonctions ...* (1875), the Jewish rag merchant becomes the squalid, lowest form of trash dealer, whose qualities just happen to become those of every Jew.⁹ A figure like Du Camp's ragman is to emerge again, some seventy years later, in Marcel Carné's film *Les Enfants du Paradis* (1944). Here, in the glorious, displeasing ambivalence of the character Jéricho, the Jew's dealing and the city's form turn out still to be inseparable – but now at the very moment of the liberation of Paris from the Nazi rule that had eliminated its population of living Jews.

Between Salomon and Jéricho there sits a tomb at the cemetery of Père Lachaise. The sepulcher of Michel and Calmann Lévy, who were, after all, the

7 Murger 1988, p. 252.

8 Wagner 1910.

9 Du Camp 1869–75, vol. 6, sections on the rag trade and on cemeteries.

creators of the modern industry of French publishing, is modest enough and free from any maudlin rhetoric of grief or show of wealth. Editors of Gustave Flaubert, of Maxime Du Camp, of Murger, and of Ernest Renan, more than a few of their authors grappled with the image of the Jew as vile or sacred. Renan's Catholic enemies, in condemning his *Vie de Jésus* (1863), insisted that he was really running with the Jews. As has been pointed out, not only was Renan supposed to have accepted a million from Rothschild to accomplish his historical relativising of Jesus as a Jew, but this 'author and sometime abbot and the Jewish [israélite] editor [Michel Lévy] have made a packet' in their common anti-Christianism.¹⁰ And here is a crucial figure of abjection; the capitalist Jew dealing Catholicism back to itself, corrupted. Indeed, the capitalist is the only truly convincing figure of arrival for a Jew, who, having come from nowhere, can hardly inherit any social merit. Inevitably, and in this sole capacity for arriving, she or he figures the decline of feudal and aristocratic France, as the diminishing of landed wealth brings with it dependence on the Jew's successful dealings.

This theme of dependence is at the heart of the most famous of all French anti-Semitic texts, Edouard Drumont's *La France juive* (1887), where the vampiric nightmare of a naive, pleasure-loving aristocracy, overgenerous and free from any trace of hatred, offering itself to the bloodsucking, plutocratic, rasping, wheezing, Germanic Jews, is fully dreamed:

The heraldic goym who rush to visit the Rothschild are not attracted just by the perfume of some Romanée [the famous vineyard then owned by them]. Many amongst those who seek this humiliating hospitality have got at home their own little wine that is not bad, an old hotel and family portraits ... For them to visit the Rothschild is to go to the court. The king of Jews, the Jew of kings is not quite Louis XIV, but they have the illusion of being in a palace.¹¹

The Jew illuminates the aporia of French identity that has failed itself, that, through revolution and economic change, is insufficient to its own glorious history. And this impasse structures the ambivalence of the enemy, the mapping of the foreign Jews, pronouncing 'p' for 'b' and 'b' for 'p', onto the Germanness of their origins, and of Germanness as enemy onto the sickly, 'prematurely decrepit' Jew's easily available foreignness. The Rothschilds wanted to conquer

¹⁰ Birnbaum 1993, pp. 118 and 346.

¹¹ Drumont 1886, vol. 2, p. 105. This and all further quotation from vol. 2 of the 1887 edition.

France – was not the armistice of the Franco-Prussian war of 1871 signed at their château of Ferrières? – ‘they conquered her, and they felt that she was dying in their noxious breath, that it was only a corpse they had got themselves’.¹² Yet the German, enemy of this weak Judaic France, is also ally of a strong Frenchness that counts on it to counter the Jew within. Wagner and Wagnerism in music, which Drumont had already invoked against feeble Frenchness in his *Richard Wagner, l’homme et le musicien* (1869), fulfilled at one and the same time both of these roles. For over half a century it was to excite hatred of its author, the great German musician who had laughed at the French defeat in 1871. And it was to be recruited as a weapon to undo the hated if irresistible effects of ‘Jewish music’, Meyerbeer or Bizet, through the alternative modernity of Debussy, of Chausson, of d’Indy.

Near where the Lévy brothers lie in the cemetery lies the actress Rachel, an altogether more stylish sepulcher. According to Du Camp, it was the centre of an impassioned cult in the years after her death. Alongside the Lévy’s lie the Rothschilds, substantial if more discreet in death than in life. And there is one vault for a ‘M. X from Pesth, born in Vienna, died in Paris’, a fair enough trajectory for the homeless Jew, a ‘from’, a ‘born’, an arrival, pure and simple. No one today comes to this part of the cemetery, or certainly not by intention to see these tombs.

You can note a few gay men, who have been advised by various guides that this Southern sector is a *lieu de drague*, and who are surprised and disappointed by its emptiness. But this is not the Quai des Tuileries. It was my own surprise at the guide’s directions that took me there, to see if Père Lachaise could really be a temple of libidinous vivacity. Out of one text, then, I found another, out of the Spartacus or Gai Pied guides came Hebrew inscriptions to efface their simple if mistaken indications. And I found this article, too, which began with Michel Lévy’s tomb.

In this unexpected disjuncture it seemed worth thinking about the desire, so commonly expressed in our own day, of gay Jews to identify with their religion as practising Jews, some even forming their own synagogues (and of gay Christians to be communicants and priests), in the teeth of a scripture (and a Christian priesthood) that is structured by homophobia. Is it not the perfect instance of the aporetic argument that the ‘norm’ should both be and not be, embrace and differentiate, exclude and celebrate? Does the text which rules out ‘that’ rule out this Jew? Is this Jew the subject of that text? Or is this Jew not just the subject of that text, because she or he is anyway the faithful subject of

12 Murger 1988, p. 107.

the whole text as an historical identity, as an ethic, in all its argued forms? And why do this and that have to be identified with each other, above the right to civil status?

The strategy of essentialism may exceed itself in a self-realised as well as self-realising defeat, no less shattering than that either of being assimilated or of maintaining one's culture, and yet ending up in the same vélodrome or concentration camp. Indifferently the Nazi régime in France did away with Max Jacob, good-Catholic-ex-Jew; Maurice Sachs, likewise, gay and Nazi-admirer, too; or Marc Bloch, who was an historian and nothing more complicated than just a Jew. Civil status may in the end come only as an effect of learning not to need the 'other' to represent and so efface one's own diffraction, which would be an ultimate test of the capacity for self-reflection. Otherwise, 'others' will appear to end up in the same grave whether they deserve this similarity or not.

In the cemetery the Jews are hemmed in by the phoney, pre-Disney monument to Héloïse and Abelard, and the great hostess and poetess Anna de Noailles, whose tomb stands at the limits of the supposed trysting place. The visitors who do go to Père Lachaise for Jewish tombs are more inclined to the ones higher up on the hill, clustered around the monuments to the deportation. These are often quite pathetic, doubly so as the photographic ceramics of long-dead deportees are even now abused, and because the terrible, profoundly kitsch representations of suffering, in the form of the concentration camp memorials, cast a black shadow over the records of their life. As has been pointed out, even these monuments are dedicated to the Resistance rather than the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.¹³

They are somewhat showily grouped around the more discreetly showy tombs of the first-generation leaders of the French Communist Party, facing the Federals' Wall, the memorial to the massacred Communards of 1871. People, slaughtered revolutionaries, so much despised by the brothers Lévy and their famous authors. The matter is not an easy one. For was not one of the most virulent anti-semitic documents of the fin-de-siècle, *Du Molochisme juif* (1884), penned by the ex-Communard Gustave Tridon? And if Tridon's objective in his obscene fantasy of Judaism was the perfectly worthy, republican discrediting of Christianity through its assumed origins, then his language far exceeded the virtue of this aim.

The ensemble – the Wall, the Party tombs, the concentration camp memorials – adds up to one of those preemptive strikes on history that used to preoc-

13 Wiewiorka 1994.

cupy the Communist Party in its desire to be at the very end of grand narratives, here of both resistance and class struggle. Be this as it may, it is this, no doubt, that the visitors prefer. Better by far the dramatic *dénouement* of a set of social relations, a rhetorical closure that satisfies the maudlin desire for the grim spectacle of moral finality, than traces of the complex, slow unfolding of a civilisation in all its rich uncertainty. Holocaust here effaces history, doubly, of the Jews and so of holocaust itself.

But let us note another effacement of this place, one which the Right could recognise. These Jews buried in the middle of the last century have acquired a homeland. In the strictest of right-wing, monarchist definitions, to have a home is to have a burial ground, and if the buried Jews have won this place, or bought it rather, then have they effaced a bit of France, or have they been made French in death? Consider these lines of Maurice Barrès, as well as the problem that the buried Jews might pose for his ecstatic morbidity:

In certain islands without a recorded history, where prehistoric homesteads remain on the surface of the earth, everything is raw, the water, the milk, the eggs, and flavorless. Man can find nothing but insipidity on this too new earth that has not been made by corpses. The cup of pleasure needs the taste of ashes. I need tombs that speak for me to halt before the most beautiful landscape. Every living being is born from an earth, a race, an atmosphere, and the genie does not show itself as such unless it is tightly bound to the land and to its dead. The cemetery is the fatherland. The nation, this is the ownership in common of an ancient cemetery and of the will to set a worth to this joint heritage. With a seat of education and a cemetery one has the basics of a fatherland.¹⁴

The flavour of the nation, it cannot but follow, its acquired and death-won savours, must in part become Jewish, tasting of a man from Pesth, born in Vienna but dying in Paris, slipping into the tomb despite his being born elsewhere, his foreign atmosphere around him. Irremediably his bond with the funeral land of France makes her atmosphere what it is, changing a taste. In a sense, the Deportation solved the problem by sending them to Germany or Poland to die, to the sites demarcated solely for this purpose, sites that now make the atmosphere of Europe what it is. And, after all, the negative connotation of Jew with German was strong enough, even for the Vichy client, for a reactionary France to pile one abjection upon another – the abject, Jewish part

14 Cited in Eckhoud 1904, pp. 157–8.

of France to be cast out into the land of the German ally of and in abjection, the ally-conqueror of 1870, 1914, and 1940.

There is a famous scene in Jean Renoir's once scandalous, filmic comedy of social manners *La Règle du jeu* (1939), the scene after the guests have installed themselves in the great Solognais Chateau belonging to the Duc de la Chesniet. At the heart of the film's critique lies the class struggle of master and servant, respectable servant and gamekeeper, bohemian and bourgeois, a social typology where the overflow of narratives, desires, needs, from one stratum to another, delineates the brink of disaster for all. In this scene the camera leaves the upper class to settle in to their accommodation, and we are cut to the dinnertime conversation in the servants' quarters. It turns to the mores, fads, and origins of their masters and mistresses. 'At least', one servant ripostes to another, defending some fun at his boss's expense, 'he's not a Yid like la Chesniet'. The reply is surprised, 'La Chesniet a Yid?' ... 'Yes, he had a grandmother who was a Rosenthal from Frankfurt'. The cinema-going audience of 1939 already knew that something was afoot with this aristocratic la Chesniet, elegant, supple, and subtle in his speech and manners, for he was played by Dalio, the specialised actor of stereotypically poor or outcast Jews. He had been a Semitic Judas to Robert le Vigan's rather more northern-looking Jesus in Julien Duvivier's conservative, Catholic film, *Golgotha* (1934). The original public for *La Règle du jeu*, largely scandalised by its almost callous parody of refined manners, was equally invited to view it as both pro- and anti-semitic, with so eminent an anti-semitite as Lucien Rebatet arguing that it should satisfy both tendencies.¹⁵ And so too the notorious hunt scene – a crucial moment in the film, if it is seen against Barres and Drumont – begins to deny its usual and rather easy reading as the image of a destructive and self-seeking bourgeoisie on the eve of national catastrophe. Rather, the hunt resonates in its very failure to escape from these questions of the Jew-arrived to a more general politics: how does the land taste if la Chesniet is a Yid, and what is a hunt if it is a Jewish hunt? For Drumont, a compelling image of the Jewish enslavement of France could be made in the Jewish social hunt of the aristocracy on the one hand, and their buying up of ancient hunting domains on the other: 'Fontainebleau is Ephrussi's, Versailles belongs to Hirsch, Ferrières to Rothschild'.¹⁶ Just as in the film the useless 'hunters' stand

15 For a good coverage of Jews and the cinema in France, see Goldmann and Hennebelle (eds.) 1986. And see the chapter by Jacques Gerstenkorn (Gerstenkorn 1986), pp. 188–91, for a summary of the fierce debates aroused by the film. For the reception of Renoir, see Vanoye 1989. Vanoye and other film historians give disparate versions of which critics wrote what, though there is agreement on Rebater's intervention.

16 Drumont 1886, p. 82.

stock still in their hides while the gamekeepers drive the helpless animals, rabbits and birds, to their line of fire, in Drumont it is the Jews who elaborate the 'economic' hunt – the hunt with a deer driven to its pursuants, only to be rescued, given alcohol, and recycled. Through this farce it is the Jews who admit the ancient families of Rohan and Chabot back to their ancestral land.

In the end Renoir writes over Drumont not in his cinema of social critique, which is hard put to escape him, but through the slippage of the signs of Jew, of those very 'p's' and 'b's' that mark out Jewish speech. The foreign voice in *La Règle* is not that of the exquisitely spoken Dalio-la Chesniet, but that of his blamelessly Aryan, Austrian wife, whose clumsy, generous elocution haunts the soundtrack. It is her social and amorous ineptitude that sets her apart from French manners, be they pure or purely Jewish, and sets them in crisis. The destructive force that leads the film to tragi-farce with the shooting of the honest, simple French aviator, is the heavily accented gamekeeper Schumacher, the Frenchman who, as an Alsatian, represents the historical ambiguity of the very distinction between French and German on which the defining of Jew as Germanic must be founded or, in foundering, must make this much too clear; that the self is not easily named and circumscribed.

One of the insights that might be attributed to Joseph Losey's film *M. Klein* (1976) – in which the eponymous hero, Alsatian too, suspected of Jewish origins, but proven to be 'purely' French, nonetheless willfully joins the train from the Vél d'Hiver – is that the Jews bore as much the weight of desire as of hatred, sacrificial victims with whom to reenact the history of French abjection to German might. When the fastidious Klein, an art dealer, at this moment specialising in mopping up Jewish property in wartime Paris, first fears that he is suspected of being Jewish it is because he finds a copy of the 'official' wartime paper *Informations juives*, apparently addressed to him, on his doormat. And this just as he sees out one of his commercial victims, a Jew. He tries to find the (other) M. Klein to whom the paper must have been addressed. He seeks and interrogates the editors of *Informations*, he traces an address, he waits for contacts, meets lovers of a man who may not even exist, who might be him. Among guests in a fashionable apartment he glances cautiously, fearfully into a mirror. He sees nothing but himself. Certainly not the race-science measurements of Jewish noses, breasts, and hips with which the film has opened in its fearful sequence of a middle-age couple being measured, hoping against hope that their measurements are 'wrong'. Must he become a Jew to himself, to efface his own reflection as French? Yet he cannot be sure, he is trapped by a system of imagery already bearing the signs of Jew. When he buys a painting from a Jew just before the fatal discovery on his doormat, Klein throws the gold on the table in an excessive gesture that is as vulgar as it is mean.



FIGURE 44 *M Klein seeks 'M Klein', the concierge, the presence of the collaborationist police.* (*M Klein* by Joseph Losey, 1976, Studio Canal, 2008)

Like *Médicis*. Commerce itself, fair or unfair, honest or dishonest, is impossible without the risk of a contamination that is already of the social body, with or without the Jew. The Jew is nothing but a name for another inevitability as well as for the denial of that inevitability. When the collaborationist police come for Klein's property, he refuses to give up only the Jew's painting: 'It's not for commerce', he insists, 'it's family property'. Good Frenchman that he is, he chooses deportation – at the very moment when certificates arrive to prove his racial purity. The Jew is desire, pure and the compelling mystery of lack.

But not all Jews bought a site in Père Lachaise. In 1841 the *Archives israélites de France* exposed some of the complicated dimensions of Jewish dying in Paris. In an article of the May issue, there is a debate concerning the emergence of a serious difference between the Consistoire (the Jewish board of community self-governance set up under Napoleon I) and the community on the organisation of burial. The journal remarks that:

As far as their death is concerned, even those who are the most detached from religious practice are loath not to conform to established custom. There is nothing extraordinary about the luxury of the tombs in which, these days, the opulent Jewish (*israélites*) families wish to imitate the Christians; already the Bible offers these sepulchral vaults (Gen. 23), types of monument and family tombs ...

The problem is that, with the reorganisation of the cemeteries by the city authorities, the land of the paupers' burials will be leveled off and topped up for reuse, breaking both Jewish law and erasing the memory of poorer Jews. The Eastern cemetery (Père Lachaise):

opens its graves only to the coffins of the rich, and if the family of a deceased person lacks 543 fr to spend on a tomb, then the hearse that bears his remains must roll toward the northern cemetery ...¹⁷

The slightly anxious tone forestalls and oddly chimes with Maxime Du Camp's remarks on the cemetery written in the 1870s, another strange alliance in the making, with Du Camp writing over the Jew's self-evident truth with a pure ideology of race. In *Paris, ses organes* Du Camp comments:

The new section of Père Lachaise, where the showy tombs affect all sorts of pretentious and sterile forms, looks like an improvised city whose inhabitants have not turned up. It's displeasing to see. There's nothing there but white stones which the workers sculpt while they whistle: all is new, the monuments, the epitaphs, the grills, the wreaths, even the names that no one has heard pronounced: you could call these the little palaces of a people of 'parvenus.' Eternity for a self-love that wants to survive beyond unbeing. Which makes the most efforts to escape being forgotten? Is it glory? Is it nobility? Is it money? It is money.¹⁸

Du Camp is not writing directly of the Jewish part of the cemetery. He does a few pages later, discussing the cult of Rachel, whose tomb might be flashy enough to lend some credence to his irritable description.¹⁹

But who can say what enough might be? And he is interested to note its physical separation from the Christian area for the observation of religious rites. But while he writes of industrialists' tombs, the tombs of a new class who are always fair game for satire, the point is not just that money counts beyond the grave. On the contrary, the argument is ridiculous, and therein lies its meaning. For Du Camp is not about to denounce the grandiose and dramatic tombs of the nobles or of the French kings and queens at Saint-Denis. It is this slightly unhinged illogic and the use of the words 'parvenus', 'not heard

17 *Archives israélites de France: Recueil mensuel, historique, biographique, bibliographique et littéraire, par une société d'hommes de lettres sous la direction de S. Cahen, traducteur de la Bible*, Supplément no. 5. Mai (1841), 11^e année, pp. 318, 326.

18 Du Camp 1869–75, p. 190.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 192 ff.

pronounced', 'self-love,' that alert us to the subject of Jew. And if the workmen whistle irreligiously, there is something utterly Parisian about the image. Their work is not dishonest, even though the tombs are a sham. Set to work, they disturb a peace that should, in the best of all possible, timeless worlds, have been primordial, a pure relation of soil and flesh such as was to nourish Barrès's unpleasant invocation.

In the cemetery the right to emancipation is inscribed on the tombs of the substantial and well-heeled dead who could pay the cost of a sepulcher. But the Jewish dead of the common grave were ploughed over every few years, sharing the land in common with their compatriots in death rather than their correligionists of life. In this sense Jews were no different from anyone else, even if their demands on the rite and hence the site of burial were quite particular. They belonged to social classes. One result of this is that in memory one class of Jew stands in for the other, through the inscriptions they could afford to leave. As the *Archives israélites* insisted, the poor in their common grave could not even ensure their memory. Yet memory is the very medium through which Israel lives:

Israel lives first and foremost in its memories, fighting still with David in mind, thinking with Solomon, weeping with Jeremiah, and it is above all in the cemetery that this genius for the past has established its solitary empire. There, should we pull together our history with contemporary life, we let our memories wander in a long gone world, we breathe the air of times that are no more ...²⁰

The very alignment of the graves, the winding paths, their city-like topography, is a metaphor for a way of living in the past. The cemetery is required for this, no more. Here the Jews neither need nor desire to give their flavour to the nation. Alone they record the timescale of their persistence. And this a century before Walter Benjamin invented Messianic Time as a category of historical experience! Yet the inadequacy of the common grave in Paris to the enduring memory of difference and the right to emancipation is as striking as its adequacy at Auschwitz. The inscription 'M. X from Vienna, born in Pesth, died in Paris' is a dead letter since the Holocaust, and for this reason utopian. Once upon a time it was simultaneously an effacement of being Jewish and of being French, both perhaps felt as some mere contingency.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 332.

Anyway, Salomon reappears in *Les Enfants du Paradis* as the clothes seller Jéricho, who was not intended by Carné as an anti-Semitic figure. Indeed, Carné was surprised at the very suggestion – ‘it never occurred to me’, he said in an interview. It is not hard to see why. Even in a newsreel film of 1932, in a reportage on Rosh Hashanah, there was no other way of showing Jews than with big noses, even if this meant, for newsreel’s sake, taking some footage of Jews who did have big noses.²¹ When Jéricho inspects some stolen spoons for the murderer-thief Lacenaire, he rattles them, running them between his hands. He knows they are only plate by the sound they make. He was to have been played by a real-life anti-Semite, the specialist in true French roles, Robert le Vigan, to whose Jesus of 1934, Dalio, the perfectly stereotyped actor of Jews, had played Judas. But while the film was being shot le Vigan, along with his admirer the novelist and anti-Semitic propagandist Céline, had made the enforced pilgrimage to Sigmaringen – the resort offered by the defeated Nazis to their closest collaborators – and the more neutral Pierre Renoir was substituted. But had Carné wanted his figure to be Jewish, he could have cast a Dalio. After all, caricatures have to be of something, to have some historical substance and finally be thought of as embodied in a figure of cultural experience. So Jéricho, who is a form of knowledge, of the kind that derives its power from the empathy with the commodity, from always knowing its price and value and mode of circulation, which is also the circulation of feelings between people, Jéricho makes connections and rattles silver. More Jewish than Salomon, his voice rasps like Wagner’s Jew: ‘who has not been shocked and held to the spot, partly in horror and partly by a sense of their absurdity, at hearing those gurgling, jodeling and babbling sounds confusive of all trace of sense and spirit ...’²²

By all these established relations of image to image, more or less partial and complete slippages and substitutions of the one for the other – Jéricho’s disreputability and greed, his clinking of cash, his secretive, self-serving linking of the narratives of other people’s lives – Jéricho could not but be a figure bearing the name of Jew. But if he were not a Jew, there would be no text. The social life of the capitalist city would be without an image. There would be no non-Jews. There would be no connections or procurements between them, fabricated out of commodities and circulating like commodities. No, ironically, there would be no text at all. Just babble. *Pace* Wagner, Jew and culture form the perfect palimpsest of the self and other that culture is.

21 This newsreel is in a selection of anecdotal news items, *Actualités Gaumont – la Fête de Roch Hachana*, 1932, in the Vidéothèque de Paris, found under subject-search ‘juifs’. For Carné’s view on Jéricho, see Turk 1989, p. 266.

22 Wagner 1910, p. 27.

Nonetheless, it is important not to become sentimental. What I have come to argue is simply that, for a certain moment in the history of capitalist democracies, and at certain sites, the Jew becomes more than a sign pointing to alterity or abjection; an embodied grammar, a means for making sense, an indispensable structure of the self.

Il y a des mots qu'on souhaiterait ne plus lire¹

My first reading of Jacques Rancière's work took place in a bookshop in Paris some time in 1978. Though I had set out to read *Lire le Capital* (Reading Capital) years before, I never got anywhere near to his contribution, and had overlooked the extract from his *La Leçon d'Althusser* (Althusser's Lesson) translated by Jonathan Rée in *Radical Philosophy* in 1974. What I found in 1978 was the number 7 of *Les Révoltes logiques* containing his essay 'Le bon temps ou la barrière des plaisirs'.² Roger Thomas and I later included this, together with Rancière and Vauday's 'En allant à l'expo', in our book *Voices of the People*, a collection of essays on the social life of Second Empire Paris and the Commune that between them represented the then happy cohabitation of *Les Révoltes logiques* with a complex social history that was yet open to a militant populism.³ (By 1981 this alliance had disintegrated in *Les Révoltes logiques* itself.) Rancière and Alain Faure's *La Parole ouvrière* (*The Workers' Speech*) was one of those collections that made the teaching of such a history possible.⁴ I suppose that one would think of *Voices of the People*, then, as strung out between the cumulative effects of Foucauldian notions of the archive on the one hand, Gramscian ideas of hegemony on the other, and a post-Thompsonian figuring of the lost voices of

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- 1 [There are words that one would wish never to read again]. Rancière 2003a, p. 7.
- 2 Now reprinted in Rancière 2003a, pp. 203–52.
- 3 'En allant à l'expo, l'ouvrier, sa femme et les machines', reprinted in Rancière 2003a, pp. 63–4. See 'Good Times or Pleasure at the Barricades' and 'Going to the Expo: the Worker, His Wife and the Machines', in Rifkin and Thomas (eds.) 1988, pp. 23–44, and 45–94.
- 4 *Les Révoltes logiques, cahiers du centre de la recherche sur les idéologies de la révolte* (1975–1983). To use Rancière's own words, drawn from his introduction to *Les Scènes du peuple* (Rancière 2003a, p. 17), it 'was not a journal that received articles one with another, but the expression of a "colletif de travail et de discussion ..."'. This volume contains the entirety of his articles from *Les Révoltes logiques*, bar one, with a couple of essays from other publications including *Les Sauvages dans la cité* (Rancière and Beaune 1985) and final thematic book versions of *Les Révoltes logiques*. Where the reader cannot obtain copies of *Les Révoltes logiques* itself, this volume is the major point of reference, and Rancière's introduction perfectly covers the issues that I am trying to raise here and, I hope, broadly substantiates them. *La Parole ouvrière 1830/1851*, edited by Alain Faure and Jacques Rancière (Paris, 18 October 1976). For the extract from *Althusser's Lesson*, see Rée 1974.

the people: that is to say, from our point of view, the one from which we assimilated the thinking of *Les Révoltes logiques*. Which is to say a framework of social history, Birmingham Cultural Studies and an emerging 'new art history'.

I should add that one of these articles, 'En allant à l'expo', had been turned down by *History Workshop Journal* after a reading of my own draft translation in 1979, ironically just before Rancière's appearance at the annual Ruskin workshop – his contribution to which is to be found in *People's History and Socialist Theory*.⁵ The reason that eventually filtered through to me was to the effect that a section of the editorial board had reacted to it as 'an insult to the working class', something that I took as an acknowledgement of its underlying philosophical originality and its abrasion of a self-satisfied ouvrierism. Indeed the context of working-class historiography within which his work emerged in France was one that embraced the same kind of populism, though in different forms and with different allegiances. Largely focused around the Paris Commune and the preceding autonomous (the word was loaded with contemporary importance) worker movements from the Banquets of the 1830s to the clubs of 1848 and the meetings of the closing years of the Second Empire, these histories made an ample use of 'popular' materials, songs and song sheets, prints, tracts, reviews and newspapers. In doing this they figured a voice for the modern working class that inherited the rhetorics of the Great Revolution – the rhetorics, that is to say, of leftist history writing itself. As Rancière pointed out at History Workshop, it was largely the Catholic socialists who treated the working-class movement as anything more than a projection of 1798 into an idealised socialist process of the present. It is interesting, in setting even such a short piece as was that intervention concerning the multiple failures of social(ist) history in France alongside the related discussions of Stuart Hall, E.P. Thompson, Sally Alexander or Gareth Steadman-Jones, to see quite how it was slightly, but crucially, beside the point.⁶

Leafing through some early numbers of *Ideology and Consciousness* and one or two other journals of the late 70s, including numbers of *New Left Review* (Stedman Jones on John Foster and Henri Lefebvre in issue 90), as well as the working papers of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) and volumes such as *Class, Hegemony and Party*, published by the Communist

5 Samuel (ed.) 1981.

6 See below, note 7. It is worth underlining that I am accounting for a particular response to Rancière from within a largely British context and that the more general Anglophone take up on these matters, as well as a scrupulous study of the French context is to be found in Donald Reid's introduction to *The Nights of Labor* (Rancière 1989). See Reid's introduction, p. xxv, for the disagreement of Sewell et al. which I mention below.

University of London in 1977,⁷ you can see how the moment was adventurous in the ways that different generations of thinkers were prepared to take on so much in the fallout of ongoing socialist and communist crises as well as the rise of the politics of the 'Other'; whether this was specifically in terms of the reinvention of a communist history writing at one extreme or whether, on the other, it was in search of an expanded field of cultural analysis through the theory emerging in *Screen*, the psychoanalytic feminism of a Juliet Mitchell,⁸ or the theory versus praxis travails of Cultural Studies in Birmingham, for example. But one way or another one was forced towards, and indeed, longed for an eclectic synthesis or shortcut to a theoretical-practical epiphany. That this might be invested in writing was not on the manifest agenda.

Thus an editorial collective article, 'Psychology, ideology and the human subject' in *Ideology and Consciousness*, programmatically maps out the implications of the determination to deal with what will come to be known as French Theory – although there was also plenty of Italian theory from Gramsci to Colletti, that not too long after seems to have lost its impetus.⁹ The CCCS volume *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics*, published in 1982 but representing ongoing discussions, is largely oriented around the critique of E.P. Thompson and the question of realism in history from below, and the problem of objectivity.¹⁰ Here, in fact, we can find an early reference to the historical critique that has been engaged in *Les Révoltes logiques*. In the article 'Charms of residence, the public and the past' (256–7), Michael Bommes and Patrick Wright cite both Rancière and Philippe Hoyal (who wrote on the concept of 'patrimoine' in *Les Révoltes logiques*, as well as being one of the authors of the notorious collective article 'Deux ou trois choses que l'historien ne veut pas savoir'.)¹¹ Wright and Bommes, who are addressing themselves to the emergence of the cultural heritage industries, both see Rancière as a demystifier and the project of *Les Révoltes logiques* as one that can be brought into alignment with the problematics of a British historiography, but under the auspices of the concept of hegemony. This is a move that, I think we will all agree, sidesteps the philosophical warning implicit in the conjunction 'révoltes' – 'logiques', rather

7 Bloomfield (ed.) 1977, containing essays by John Bloomfield, Richard Gunn, Stuart Hall, Robert Gray, Barry Hindess, Gerry Leversha. Note that gender is not a high priority here, but Hall's 'Rethinking the Base-and-Superstructure Metaphor', pp. 43–72, has a classic status.

8 Mitchell 1975.

9 *Ideology and Consciousness* 1 (1977).

10 Johnson et al. (ed.) 1982.

11 Le Mouvement social 1977.

as William Sewell did over the related issue of interpretation and archive of working-class practices.¹² But at the same time it is easy enough to see why there seemed to be more of a community of interests than in effect there ever was. So if Rancière was at an angle to all of this, it was not in the sense of redundancy, of course; but in being not quite in touch with those preoccupations, in being elsewhere.

In the postscript to the 1976 edition of his 1955 biography, *William Morris*, E.P. Thompson is concerned with the ethical dimensions of his subject rather than a more or less schematic exploration of his more or less close adherence to a Marxian tradition, where each element of such an equation had been teleologically defined in terms of the other.¹³ It was true; these were thankless tasks, even if they led to the realisation of a certain kind of vernacular or popular historicism. His reflections belonged not only to a history of communism but to a people's history that was both a function of communist historiography, going back to Ralph Fox, Christopher Caudwell, A.L. Morton and his own earlier work,¹⁴ and at the same time was a register of desire – of the desire for a history that, were it adequately evoked, might yet lead to the disclosure of the means to a better present. In a sense the Communist historians, even in their moments of repentance, were not wholly unlike the literary giants of the nineteenth century in France, such as Georges Sand, who tried to mould a working-class literature in the form of a necessary and desirable otherness. It is something like this that Rancière has disclosed throughout his work since *Les Révoltes logiques*, and through which he then mapped a concept of misrecognition that has remained fundamental for what has followed – as well as the more general proposition that marks his writing, 'we must take things in the opposite sense' or 'the other way round'. This knowledge is also the structure that haunts *Les Mots de l'histoire* in the passage of identification between the historian and the king.¹⁵

Thompson's postscript in effect forms an important aspect of his finishing with the British Communist Party on the one hand and his differend with Althusser on the other, as he was to set it out in *The Poverty of Theory*. Thompson was both before and after Althusser profoundly vexed by the agency of the subjects, the subject in a sense of his *The Making of the English Working Class*. This was always and already incompatible with a Lacano-Althusserian version of the interpellated subject, as was the slave-subject of Eugene Genovese's *Roll Jordan*

12 Sewell 1980.

13 Thompson 1977.

14 Fox 1945; Caudwell 1938, and 1977; Morton 1938, and 1952.

15 *Les Mots de l'histoire*. Reissued as Rancière 1992; translated as Rancière 1994.

Roll, the World the Slaves Made.¹⁶ However much one can say that Althusser or Poulantzas owed to Gramsci, as Stuart Hall showed, they increasingly came to acknowledge that it was not the idea of a self-forming artisanal or working class (or slave culture, for that matter) shot through with societal tendencies and contradictions, that concerned them, but an ongoing and autonomous crisis of capital in the making. If one could think of both these extremes having been in their own way a new nominalism, the latter in terms of the general crisis and the former in its immanent ethical system, one might then say that Rancière almost innocently elides both in his radical evasion of any nominalist model.

In this context the *détournement* effected by *Les Révoltes logiques* and Rancière's work in particular, the twisting of identitarian matters to a fluid and unexpected non-system of misrecognitions – in which the contemporary Communist historian might seem more like Georges Sand than Robespierre – ineluctably led to another blank misrecognition or outraged puzzlement, of which the reaction of History Workshop was a counterpart to the bemused tolerance of some French-left mandarins. The same incapacity to accept or even to read the new question posed by Rancière's essays and his subsequent writing on the worker poets, culminating with *La Nuit des prolétaires*, 'Ronds de fumée' ('Smoke Rings'), *Les Sauvages dans la cité* (The Savages in the City) and other essays or editions, including the wonderful collection of Gauny's writings, emerged in full in his dispute with Sewell and the Yale historians, as well as in Neil McWilliam's more art-historical critique.¹⁷ Being an ex-Maoist, with the anti-nominalism of the good 'ex-ist', I think, helped one in sidestepping this particular dead end.

If Rancière's work now plays an important role in contemporary political theory this is probably because, since the publication of *La Mésentente*, it has responded to a lack or a frustration in the convoluted postponements of what has come to be constituted as 'French theory': because he has continued to evolve questions that disclose an unexpected sightline on the generality of our preoccupations, turning them around themselves so that 'democracy', for example, is prised from our expectations of it, just as, in the writing on the worker poets, class identity was disclosed as an wholly unexpected matter of identification and otherness and the oddity of their historically possible overlapping.¹⁸ This adjustment, in the direction of an expectation, is always a

16 Genovese 1976.

17 Rancière 1983b; Rancière 1983d; Rancière and Beaune 1985; Gauny 1983. [The obvious point of reference for McWilliam is McWilliam 1993. Unfortunately I have not been able to locate the reference to Rancière (ed.).]

18 Rancière 1995, translated as Rancière 1999.

qualitative matter, never numerical; not just a matter of how many workers, or which institutions tend to a type of behaviour – with the figures against him, as some of his critics have argued.

You could say that my reading has something of the character of a conversion or, better, a turning aside, and this is why I find that a figure for Rancière's thinking – one that emerges from it – is his description of Ingrid Bergman's role in Rossellini's *Europa 1951*, in his *Courts voyages au pays du peuple*.¹⁹ She steps aside, she is given to see, but loses all. I don't want just to say that this is a Pauline moment and so to lapse into nominalism, because, as a conversion, this is neither once nor forever, it is possibly repeatable and, for his reader, with a different outcome on each occasion; like interpellation, but away from subjecthood rather than into it; a passage away from Althusser, a what if of the subject rather than an as if, a misinterpellation like that of the worker poets themselves, which is a what if as if it were an as if. In this sense the writing is performative and as such it also works through a poetic.

So the article in the bookshop was a peculiar pleasure. Even as I read, it operated a displacement of the ways that I had been trying to work through the very archive that was in question.²⁰ For me this was routed through yet another argument of the 1970s to do with the interpretation of Manet's paintings of modern life and other kinds of Parisian imagery that preoccupied 'social history of art'. The problem of the music hall had become important in the interpretation of French pictorial modernity, and while it was a new material in art history and implied its capacity to function as a proper social and contextual historiography, adducing a wide range of evidences for its social-iconographic propositions, its newness had, in the end, functioned as a means of allocating freshly canonical meanings to already canonical works of art. The Benjaminian object of the city/flâneur was at the centre of these discussions – yet another figure strikingly absent from Rancière. At the same time, if, in this configuration of Cultural Studies, as in *Screen* theory, exegesis was a privileged procedure for the elaboration of the new, one effect of this was that, in the manner of the old communism which new theory was trying so hard to escape, the terrain of discovery very rapidly became a terrain of doxa.

Thus to be shaken out of a position that felt at once radical and scholarly was both disturbing and enthralling. I think that the word Rancière would give to this is *écartement*.²¹ It is both a word that he uses in writing of images or

19 Rancière 1990, translated as Rancière 2003.

20 Archives Nationales, series F21, police of entertainment.

21 Ed. *écartement* is sometimes translated as 'interval', but as Tom Conley notes of Rancier's

figures, and it is a strategy that he deploys both in positioning his own writing in relation to its intellectual ambience on the one hand and in deflecting his reader from a doctrinal reading of materials on the other. At its most skilful this setting aside is not only something that forms a content of his writing, but something that we take away from it which is not a method. So it might well have something to do with conversion, even perhaps understood in its theological sense where that entails being given to see, or at the level of a *révolte*.²² My reading of an archive then fell upon another driven by a poetic of misidentification rather than a principle, writing close to the obscure dynamics of historical documents whose explication through ‘hegemony’, for example, would all too predictably guarantee an outcome.²³

It’s useful to recall something Foucault wrote that offers a space in which to shape this matter. I mean a space rather than an argument or a system of thinking, an historical, theoretical or textual space, that we can find in one of his short essays of the early 70s. It’s a Foucault that I think of as being Rancière’s, for better or for worse, as when we discussed the introduction to *Voices of the People* with him he was pretty sure that we had overdone that aspect of his intellectual environment. (I still find Roger Thomas’s approach

Les Écarts du cinema: ‘a tricky task befalls whoever tackles a translation of the title [...] *Écart* a hidden or secret place in the tradition of French poetry of the Renaissance (e.g. Ronsard’s *écart recelé* in his *Amours*), in contemporary usage can mean distance, space, gap, interval, divergence, discrepancy, disparity, deviation; also, a condition of remaining aloof or breaking away; and even, in a legal sense, misdemeanour’. Conley 2013, pp. 143–4. Deviate or divert from is closest to the understanding in Rifkin’s essay. Many thanks to Oliver Davis for his help with this point.

- 22 The idea of ‘révolte’ as other to revolution is something taken up again by Julia Kristeva in Kristeva 1996, translated Kristeva 2000. The difference is instructive; the space between the psychoanalytic etymology and the Rimbaudien poetic is both a chasm and a borderline.
- 23 In effect the reading of ‘Le Bon temps’ made me feel the inadequacies of my article ‘Cultural Movement and the Paris Commune’ (Rifkin 1979b), which was deeply implicated in the struggles of the ‘New Art History’. The initial impact of Rancière was rather manifest in thinking quite differently about how we taught working-class and cultural history on the syllabus at Portsmouth Poly, and my approach here is a recapturing of this moment and site. *Voices of the People* (Rifkin and Thomas [eds.] 1988) was essentially a pedagogical project. Imagining how this might play out in English cultural history led me to a piece I wrote for the closing volumes of *Les Révoltes Logiques*, ‘Les écoles anglaises du dessin: un succès contradictoire’ (Rifkin 1985c). An English version appeared as Rifkin 1988b (see ‘Success Disavowed...’ in this collection). The introduction and framing of my *Street Noises: Parisian Pleasure 1900–1940* (Rifkin 1993) was likewise a working through of the trauma in the bookshop.

historiographically valid and illuminating.) Anyway the phrase in question comes from the collective work *Moi Pierre Rivière, ayant égorgé ma mère, ma soeur et mon frère*, a book that reminds us too of Foucault's active theoretical collaboration and practical intervention in collective politics at this point in time – the prison movement for example, of which this could be read as a kind of (folk) song. In his own contribution, Foucault begins his discussion of Pierre Rivière's deposition concerning his family murder like this: 'After nearly 150 years Pierre Rivière's memoir strikes us as a text of singular strangeness. Its beauty alone is sufficient justification for it today'.²⁴ The phrase is astonishing, given the reputation that Foucault was to have in the period that followed as the demystifier of social formation and its ideologies, for revealing the discursive formation of knowledges that include knowledges of art. Of course that is to do with the way in which Foucault like one after another French philosopher was taken up in Anglo-American academic discussion and identity politics once again as a source of doxa. Yet he was capable of writing perfectly ecstatic essays on his preferred artists – short and precious essays far from the grand setpieces on Velasquez or Magritte.

So here Foucault offers an historical judgement, that this text is worth preserving, as if it were an aesthetic judgement – it is worth preserving on account of its beauty alone. A judgement far from the left-documentation of the Commune, for example, in which preservation and transmission of 'lost' texts, the subaltern voice, should be first and foremost justified by its authenticity – for which one must read its unconscious adherence to an ideological construct of the oppressed or its capacity to veil the *dispositif* of this construction in our own time. This was the object of Rancière's *Le Philosophe et ses pauvres*.²⁵ It is this common space, of the historical and the aesthetic, given without a formula or a presupposition concerning their actual or eventual interchange, that I want to mark, not only because it seems to suit how one might think some of the work of *Les Révoltes logiques*, and especially Rancière's writing in it, but because – in the *après coup* – it returns in Rancière's thinking in his essay for the exhibition *Face à l'histoire*²⁶ and in his more recent *Le Partage du sensible*. Importantly then, the search for a logical consistency in Rancière's work, that

24 Foucault (ed.) 1973, translated as Foucault (ed.) 1982. Citation on p. 265.

25 Rancière 1983, translated as Rancière 2004.

26 Ameline (ed.) 1996, is the catalogue of the eponymous exhibition on the relation of art and politics from 1933 to 1996. Rancière's essay 'Sens et figures de l'histoire' (Rancière 1996, pp. 20–7) is an early working through of the poetic or aesthetic regimes of modernity that, in Rancière 2000 (translated as Rancière 2004b) come to stand in the place of modernity itself.

will specify his work as a body or as a logic, will split the founding enigma of Rimbaud's coupling of *révoltes* with *logiques*. As with Barthes or other thinkers who have resisted the project of undoing enigma, and held out against the telos of demystification, such a demand is liable to want something of this work that may be needed by 'philosophy' or 'politics', but that is not something that the work asks of itself. Such a demand is at the risk of replicating the very relation of a Georges Sand to the worker poets that Rancière so deftly unpicks.

The two essays that I just mentioned, 'Sens et figures de l'histoire' and *Le Partage du sensible*, might also be understood as something like a deliverance from the over-formulated post-Benjaminian commentaries on aesthetics and history, with what has become their overdetermined fear of the aesthetic as suspended between redemption and pollutant, depending upon how it is politically located. In the first, Rancière's engagement with painting's own engagement with history, found in the ambiguities of a Fautrier, concretises the most abstract schemas for painting's possible historicities, whereas in the second the concept of an aesthetic regime of the modern replaces the teleologies of modernity and its many supervening 'isms' and now 'ities' as well. Yet the prop of modernity/modernism and its complex syntagms and tropes is so important that if one were to insist on their being taken seriously as an historical and theoretical critique, disciplines such as mine – of art history or visual culture – would grind to a halt, short-circuited by their own sophisticated and hermetic academicism. Even the most avant-garde art historians would, in all probability, begin to say 'ah, but it is only so many paintings ... only one in ten artists' and so on, rapidly finding their own critique of what they did not want to know – about the social history of art, to evoke the article in *Le Mouvement social*.

But to return to Foucault's phrase, it also takes on a beauty of its own, in its structure as in its inflection, its surprise, that it brings to the subject at an unexpected angle, and in so doing attributes beauty to a space where it is not expected to be found – roughly here one might say the space of the people and of popular discourse – and shows that what the 'demystification' of discourse permits is a new flow or energy, a capacity to reread. A remystification if you like, not a turning from the object altogether: and not a populism to appease the sense of the loss of an historical role. A reengagement and not a leaving behind.²⁷ A Fou-

27 At the same time if there were a poetics of this history, or, rather, a poetical form for this history, one could find it in the late 50s and early 60s in the BBC's Radio Ballads, of A.L. Lloyd, Peggy Seeger, Charles Parker et. al., such as *Singing the Fishing* and *The Ballad of John Axon*. But these were a high road only to memory; they were monuments rather than gateways to a new world of thinking. Their amazing and intense poetic is one of a realism of loss artfully constructed as enacted trace of an ethically better life; in a

cault of 1973 when the politics of everyday life were separating Althusser from ... what? A starting point that was from this space and not that of 'hey you'; the space of falling on something other – some other that was not in a sentimental way free from ideology, but rather to be found in the space of a resonance that was more than just an echo of the intermediary mandarin's voice. That in itself is an Utopian idea, is it not? It's worth the pursuing, it's worth thinking how much the theory of ideology was narcissistic, as Rancière proposed in his *Le Philosophe et ses pauvres*, where the shoemaker who haunted Plato's nightmares, as he did the nightmares of the enemies of the Paris Commune, emerges in continuity with the aesthetic aporia of Wagner's Meistersinger.

If this space of Pierre Rivière is one I open for Rancière's writing, it is on account of Foucault's style of argument as from an analogy with Foucault's angle of perception, but it is also not to say that Jacques Rancière and Pierre Rivière are the same person! There is a moment in 'Le bon temps' when Rancière finds a thing in early twentieth-century cultures that was neither the space of the classic stage nor that of the panopticon (a concept that had by then swept the decks as a solution to rather than an interrogation of contemporary social relations). This space was both empirically precise – the gramophone – and theoretically disturbing; a regime of collective attention that combines and alters alike the regimes of the Cartesian subject and the surveilled one. The finding of such a space – once again, brief, understated – opens up a point of freedom in argument itself, from the newly created doxas of Foucauldianism, for which the principal threat is that of its being turned itself into doxa as the texts gain popularity and join undergraduate reading lists.

And indeed if beauty is the enemy of doxa, we should observe how Rancière's texts discern a starting point for an unexpected passage of coming to know the field of politics, history and an individual subject: starting out, for example, in *Courts voyages* from Wordsworth, starting out through revolutionary France.

sense, left-primitivism. In France meanwhile there was equally but in a different way a tradition of the recuperation of working-class urban culture, less 'Cecil Sharp' than here, but not the less romantic in its boundless and optimistic belief in the organic values of those traces, and which manifested itself not only in many studies of song cultures and popular writing, such as the little volumes from Éditions Sociales (For example, Brochon 1956, and 1957; or Cogniot 1964), but also in a pedagogical and militant diffusion of the materials of popular memory in small magazines and other media. In *Voices of the People*, the Dalotel/Freiermuth section is much more written from this point of view than from that of the university or the centres of pure research. But the difference between Rancière's *Gauny* and the above volumes was something not replicated by the new social history in England in terms of a folklorist or communist heritage.

This conjunction of two forms of the beautiful – of a style and a material – allows a text to have the quality of an escape – a way out – something that theory must offer, unless it is to be reduced to a univocal system. (Text, if you like, after a theory of text.)

That is to say, if I were to imagine a rhetorical space for his thinking, then it would be in that of the warning, against eschatology, rather than that of explication. Even if *Le Partage du sensible* is partly in the mode of explication, it is also an explosive text, in letting slip the idea that the concept of modernity in culture is not, in the end, a useful one. Yet, as a structuring force, modernity is a concept that has precisely enabled exegetics, the avant-garde doxa of infinite criticality on the grounds of its own repeatability. So this short text, in its trenchant explication, undercuts the theoretical grounding from which we ourselves might expect to understand it from our already accomplished conceptual framework.

I think here of *Le Maître ignorant*, and how its parabolic address to the educational politics of France in the first period of Mitterrand, as Kristin Ross so well represents it in the introduction to her translation, could equally have been applied to the ways in which knowledges in higher education were being formulated in England.²⁸ Here, where instruction and the consumption of instruction are instilled as an exercise of administrative power, as well as sacrificed to the broader bureaucratic structures of quality control and the regulation of all kinds of output from assessment of undergraduates to the most difficult pieces of research, it's odd to note how few of his books would adequately fit into our systems of assessment. Neither *Les Mots de l'histoire*, nor *Aux bords du politique* nor *Courts voyages* manifest either the shreds of a scholarly apparatus or the characteristics of an instructional discourse.²⁹ One of their concerns, seen from this angle, is with a certain right to think, to think aloud, a right not generally written into the constitution of academic life. To think and to rethink as a vector of certain enigmas of knowledge, as in the account of his different viewings of *Europa 1951* in the *Courts voyages* that, at the level of an ethical anaphora, so fully and poetically resumes and recuperates his account of Wordsworth's own rewritings of *The Prelude*.

In *Les Révoltes logiques*, the intellectual adventure implied by the title of the publication had its effect, the relocation of revolt in the setting aside, *écartement*, from and of the doctrinal concerns of disciplinary formations even at the moment of their coming into being, their most radical self-consciousness. It's

28 Rancière 1987, translated as Rancière 1991.

29 Rancière 1998, translated as Rancière 1995b.

worth saying right now, and I may pursue this argument, that I do not identify this effect with that of *différance* in Derrida's already famous critique of Saussure.³⁰ On the contrary, the process of asiderness that, for me, characterises Rancière's most compelling work, is normally highly specific, it has to do with a social formation, a poem, a film, a set of assumptions concerning an author, an historiographical formation, and what he sets aside and how he does works through a force of particular imagination, a set of arguments. This is not to say that there are no general themes in his work – *écartement* itself is one, but that there is not a theoretically generalised procedure or one that can be identified as with Derrida.

A final point that follows from this is the specific and in effect structural notion of *atopie*; that is to say *atopie* is both where Ingrid Bergman 'ends up', and it is the oddity of the space of misrecognition itself. I am inclined to think that this is a precedent space, one that is disclosed rather as the unconscious is disclosed in language, or in symptom, and that such a supposition throws some light on what it means that Rancière does not site himself in the fundamental discourse of the last century that is psychoanalysis. And, finally what it means that he does not position himself in the other major discourses of identity. If indeed we can think of a coming before as an analogy for the unconscious, and *écartement* itself, *atopie* as realised in the text as its momentary visibility, all is given and lost, then the value of this giving is precisely bound up with the refusal of particular states as if they were determining of the question in the first place. The unconscious is not really like Rancière's *atopie*, but at the same time his *atopie* is quite like the unconscious in the sense that its formation as a *lieu de pensée* precedes the specificity of the symptoms that it is to allow – this is why the absence of gender, race and class is not embarrassing as an element of his manifest thinking. It is a thinking that attends to the emergence of their particularities as a practice of writing, one that does indeed encompass the realm of the possible. The ideality of Rancière's work is thus entailed with this refusal, provided, that is, that the refusal itself does not instate a new nominalism, and that transient beauty is saved from enduring doxa.

30 Derrida 1972.

Gay Paris*

Trace and Ruin

Les formes de temps et d'espace seront, sauf expérience contraire, inventées et proposées à la praxis. Que l'imagination se déploie, non pas l'imaginaire qui permet la fuite et l'évasion, qui véhicule des idéologies, mais l'imaginaire qui s'investit dans l'appropriation (du temps, de l'espace, de la vie physiologique, du désir).

[Unless there be contrary indication, forms of time and space will be invented and proposed for practice. Let the imagination come into play, not the *imaginaire* that permits flight and evasion, which is the vehicle of ideologies, but *imaginaire* which invests itself in the *appropriation* (of time, of space, of physiological life, of desire).]¹

In a radio interview some years ago Bernard Tschumi spoke of the Park of La Villette to the effect that he wanted it to resemble, in an entirely new way, the coexistences and conjunctions of the industrial city in all its classic densities. Without actually invoking Poe, Simmel or Benjamin his aspirations remapped their figurations of chance and shock, of speed and anomie, of intensity and *blasé* resignation.² To make his point Tschumi gave the instance of the park's

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* This is a reworked version of an article commissioned for the *Australian Journal of French Studies* (Rifkin 1998). I am grateful to the editors for permission to re-use some of the materials here and especially to Fill Forces for her suggestion that I write the essay and for inviting me to Melbourne. My thanks to Marq Smith for his reading of this text and to Simon Ofield for his sharing of so many ideas on gay space.

1 From Lefebvre 1972, p. 117.

2 The bibliography for this piece is wide-ranging in the forms and periods of literature, and these are just a few indications. In the first place, there are the canonical city texts such as Simmel 1976, and Benjamin 1973. See especially Benjamin's discussion of Edgar Allen Poe's 'Man in the Crowd', pp. 48–54. In terms of a specific scholarship of gay space, a fine and original generic model for discussion is to be found in Bech 1996, and my own conclusion here reflects some of his thinking. Also, see Urbach 1993. Another, more heteroclitic model is the

running track, designed eventually to pass through the piano bar so that while the drinkers are to drink and the runners are to run around, sometimes they will change roles and places, and sometimes may watch or not watch each other run and drink.

Even as a version of the nightmare or epiphany of consumer blandness that is the (re)construction of the Paris of the *grands projets*, this seems pretty weak. I.M. Pei's entrance and shopping mall for the Louvre achieve much the same effect with a less self-conscious and ironic rhetoric of more obvious splendour, while the premature decay of the Opéra Bastille turns urban entropy towards a perverse sublimity. Thoroughly vapid, Tschumi's aspiration does little more than repeat the pitiful delusion that planning can ever fully coincide with the historicity that shapes it and that it will eventually frame, but which must always have been and be for ever more nothing more or less than its excess and its other. So Tschumi's park, neither as it was promised nor as it has as yet become, is barely more than Simmel's metropolis without the shock, channelling diversity down the walkways of consumer choice in an adventure playground of cultural excellence and canal rides, of gravel for boules and grass for football. Imagine that a field visit to La Villette were to be offered as a bonus for a group of urban anthropologists on holiday in EuroDisney, then they might discover that something has gone as badly wrong in the city as in its aseptic annexe, and in much the same way; with Disney, you get what you pay for; in La Villette, you get it anyway.

It might in itself seem strange that, while the model of the city quickened by Tschumi's discourse is one of which the allure was ever its capacity to incite a sense of the uncanny, then its post-modern consummation should either try so wholly to exclude the uncanny, or, like Disney, to represent it as just one

collection of essays presented in Ingram (ed.) 1997. See especially Jean-Ulrick Deser, 'Queer Space' and Maurice van Lieshout, 'Leather Nights in the Woods: Locating Male Homosexuality and Sodomasochism in a Dutch Highway Area'. The French sociologists of gay life Rommel Mendes-Leite and Pierre-Olivier de Busscher have published a slim volume, de Busscher and Mendes-Leite 1997. In my view this disheartening essay yields nothing but pretentious, prim and evasive namings of bar compartments, the whole justified by gesturing to the demands of AIDS education. Like van Lieshout, they redeploy anthropologically correct concepts such as courtship, rather than the more general, Foucauldian notion of compartment that subtends my thinking. The much discussed Martel 1997 is deeply flawed both as a history of a sociability and a movement, while it is often well documented on histories of gay business, etc. My research is based on practice and conversations, vernacular discussion in the gay press, and the diaries of a close friend, Jean M., who has written copious pages for every day of the past 25 years of cruising in gay Paris and other cities. See also my 'The Poetics of Space Rewritten: From Renaud Camus to the Gay City Guide' (Rifkin 1996b).

amongst the many tricks of industrial entertainment. Yet if Freud's classic formulation of the *heimliche* and the *unheimliche* as wholly belonging to each other remains valid, then we have to think of the uncanny as the very circumstance of the quotidian.³ For, as the bearer of everydayness's otherness to itself, it renders the everyday more or less supportable and opens it to a critical alterity. Planning and its technologies, as the ordering and representation of abstract property relations and the relations of power that attend them, necessarily set out to repress the uncanny below or beside an access to the level of daily consciousness. And it is the suspended affect of this repression that renders spaces such as La Villette and the Carré du Louvre at once fatally attractive for the freedom from anxiety that they offer, and, for the same reason, utterly unbearable. Planning and postmodern intricacies in design theory conspire to close the pathways between the conscious and its unbeing in favour of an overweening hygiene, not least in their unworldly disregard for the production of the space of sex.

So let's get away from these grand schemata to more subtle microtechnologies of capital's incessant remaking of the urban web: in Paris, at least, the digicode is perhaps the most prevalent symptom of the reallocation of power and space that we call gentrification. There are few streets so humble that landlords and coops do not see the need to protect their threshold with a digicode. Not only has it progressively excluded the stroller and architectural connoisseur from the complex interiorities of the Parisian fabric, from its archaeologies and sometimes heterotopic caesurae, but it has radically restricted the once comfortably elided sites of sexual gratification. In the 'old days', cruising gay men could readily enough, their glances crossed and met and the instant accord made, seize on this heterotopic capacity of the doorway to make over its hinterland into that privacy within the almost private that we give the name of public sex. The twisting of a stairwell, the shelter of a lean-to, the convolution or disarticulation of an industrial courtyard, any of these, could momentarily become the uncanny site of the unspoken, unseen production of the aleatory poetic of urban encounter. A poetry, moreover, that stood in exquisite apposition to that of the stroller-connoisseur in a strange inversion of each other's manner. For if the stroller aimed to historicise the anomie of the street's façades, making an act of penetration so as to turn out the details of time's passage, the cruiser pulled this complexity into the synchronic configurations of a sexual identity, a coming out of time into a mode of the transitory-absolute. Uncanniness inhabits the sexual encounter in the slippage between the iterative char-

3 Freud 1963.

acter of cruising as such and the random, non-iterative nature of its fulfilment as the contingency of any given place that is not first and foremost a cruising ground.

This distinction or complementariness is important as a matter of being in the city. For while the stroller observes and records history in texts or snapshots, the cruiser becomes like it, or one of its effects. His pleasures are imprinted by historical morphologies, shaped by the materiality of places, so that their taking is a bodily practice of the history of space. Without leaving trace or record he, or his behaviour, thus becomes a trace quite unlike the stroller's tracings. Yet both, in their frustration and exclusion, now become an outcast of the city as prior to its reframing by the digicode. (Hence my use of the past tense in the preceding paragraph.)

It is difficult and probably even unnecessary to achieve sociological precision on this. After all, these matters are clear enough. That no one circulates with a dictionary of digicodes in their head. That the stroller who does not travel in an authorised group less and less has access to the courtyards and doorways of Paris, nowadays experiencing serendipity rather as a ready-made commodity, perhaps in those scholarly exhibitions of Pavillon de l'Arsenal.⁴ That, as most of my friends in Paris vouch, there has been decline in the quantity and quality of street cruising outside the traditionally defined runs of the quais, the Tuileries, pissoirs or other fully determined fields of sexual encounter. And that all of this belongs to a larger plan. The great industrial semi-wastelands like the Passage du Bureau are covered with offices, schools, community centres and municipal housing. Not just the doorways and the courtyards that once lent their shelter to a chance encounter have been locked, but the bushes round Notre Dame fenced off, the central garden of the Boulevard Richard-Lenoir made more familial, more of a place and less of a borderline.

This adds up to an ensemble of details that register a broader shift in the texture of Parisian public space from the intimate to the spectacular. The grand axis to La Défense is complete, and on its route to final fitting out, the Tuileries, that immemorial cruising way, is under 'restoration'. The Place de la Bastille is turned into a giant theatre set as the setting for a giant theatre, but the passages of the Faubourg-Saint Antoine are closed at night. This is not to say that outdoor cruising does not go on, that there are not still major spaces for public sex – the Canal, Bercy. Nor that new ones are not in the making wherever the city structure crumbles or turns into a construction site, wherever the *friche* (waste

4 See, for example, des Cars and Pinon 1991, or Cohen and Lortie 1992, for two excellent catalogues of these in fact wonderful exhibitions.

land) can be reinvented. But that the sexual outcome of a chance encounter just about anywhere in the city, that momentary and contingent gaying of a space, is more and more difficult to imagine and to accomplish. With this the secret sexual charge of the streets diminishes as an ideality of their everydayness. The great, barely spoken other of the heterosexual idea of the golden-hearted whore, gay men's practised freedom of the street, is displaced and restricted at the expense of the whole *imaginaire*.

And as this process of exclusion more or less coincides with that of gay liberation and of the final commercialisation of gay life and its efflorescence as the defining character as whole areas of the city, the Marais in Paris, Soho in London, Christopher Street in New York, Canal Street in Manchester, it collides with newly achieved freedoms in an untoward moment of overtermination to produce the interior as the place for the memorisation and retracing of the street. And this is no longer a trace of one city's history but of the ways in which such behaviour has come into being in different cities, different national cultures, and their expectations of and fantasies about each other.

But before pursuing this path, let us step back to a crucial figuration of the uncanny in the modern city; for example, to Edgar Allen Poe's *Double assassinat dans la rue Morgue*, a text which has as much claim as any to the status of an origin. This is because it uses the confluence of orders and layers of coincidence that build up through the movements, flows and rumours of the city to congeal into the temporary figure of a truth, the resolution of the crime as a moment of delay and understanding. The narrator and his friend, Poe's detective, Dupin spend a shuttered life by daytime, blocking out the light and waiting only for the fall of real darkness to set out into a Paris that Poe himself never knew at all, but imagined as yielding its secrets only at a tangent to perception. A Paris which Charles Baudelaire, the translator of this story as I quote it, would recognise and recreate. In his paradigmatic poem of urban disquiet, *Le Cygne*, he condenses forever more the aporia of imagining the unseeable object in all its over-present detail that Poe evoked in a Paris he had never seen:

Alors nous nous échappions à travers les rues, bras dessus bras dessous, continuant la conversation du jour, rôdant au hasard jusqu'à une heure très avancée et cherchant à travers les lumières désordonnées et les ténèbres de la populeuse cité ces innombrables excitations spirituelles que l'étude paisible ne peut pas donner.

[And so we escaped arm in arm through the streets, continuing our daytime conversation, roving by chance until the early hours and seeking

amongst the chaotic lights and shadows of the thronging city those innumerable excitations the spirit that peaceful study cannot offer.]⁵

In the few paragraphs of Dupin's and the narrator's night-time walk the great amateur detective reveals his powers of analysis in an astonishing account of the latter's train of thought. The explanation of Dupin's perspicacity turns around a moment when the narrator, pushed by a fruitseller, stumbles on a pile of cobblestones, 'un tas de pavés amoncelés dans un endroit où la voie est en réparation' ('a pile of cobblestones heaped in a spot where the way is under repair'), a vexation that releases the symptoms of half-conscious thoughts and which is assuaged only by a new, smoothly laid passage of wooden blocks. The conjunction of an ambulant salesman with the hazards of a city in repair and reconstruction; the provocation of a state of mind by a chance conjuncture: these invent and then recall the poet Baudelaire himself wandering through the ruins that are the construction site of Haussmann's Paris when he encounters the swan of his eponymous poem. For this poem is the crucial moment in his work in which all the inanimate signs of modernity finally transmute into allegory and the city fully signifies the plenary absence of the self. This is a Paris of the uncanny, of the upturned pavé that jolts you into the involuntary experience of alterity, on the borderlines between reason and fear or cleanliness and sleaze, the form of presentiment rather than any one feeling in itself.

But if this uncanny already has an unsettling prehistory, then it lies in Balzac's Paris of inexhaustible convolutions, in his *Illusions perdues* (1837) and *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1838), as the situation of love between two men, the criminal Vautrin and his protégé Lucien de Rubempré. The predominant drive of its literary and poetic succession is to transpose, abject and abstract Balzac's gayed spatiality and its other, Baudelaire's emptiness, into a play of denotation which, in naming Paris as woman or as parts of woman, finally achieves a heterosexual normativity in which the gay appears as never more than the connoted accident that underlines its authority and truth. The world dwindling with the digicode is both the hidden substance of this old myth of Paris and the witness to its bad faith. The world rising with the digicode is both a denial and a repository of the whole ensemble.

Consider for a moment, then, the poetics of the sauna, in Paris, in the 1990s, if I tread first the streets to reach it, and then the slippery pathways that lie within. IDM, then, 4 Rue du Faubourg Montmartre, fond de cour. To turn from the bright, touristic Faubourg down into the classic cité of Louis-Philippe's

5 Poe 1988, pp. 52–3. This is my own re-translation, Poe's original being altogether another subject.

time repeats the kitschy, old thrill of a transgression, a passage between two worlds that are fully visible to each other in the bright-blue blinds that shutter IDM's first-floor windows in the fancy stonework of the epoch. Then half a dozen modern, clumsy concrete steps mount up to the entrance, and the heavy glass door reveals the cheerful, pretty caissier, the promise of any traditional, Parisian commerce. In the entrance a double perspective: to the right is the gym beyond a narrow bar, bright, well-equipped yet accessory, even if it gets some serious use. Between bar and gym are stairs down to the changing rooms, bare, functional, bright, unpleasant. To the left, a darker world of tiles, the sound of showers and jacuzzi bubbles, vapour, bodies passing in and out of half-glassed cubicles, the bright red flannel of their towels. Above, reached by no less than three separate staircases, are the corridors and cabins, a bustling warren of dark corners, deadends and smaller spiral stairs to more deadends and the video room. The space supposes a movement both restricted and endlessly free around its thin partitions, doors hanging now half-open, now closed to a rhythm of shifting bodies that defies all sense of repetition. Up, and again, and round and round the main assemblies of cabins, sandwiched between the corridors, a dull glow from the glass bricks under foot, time has no meaning other than that which can be measured by the unmeasurable length of expectation. But down on the left, in front of the steamroom, the space contracts from the jacuzzi, showers and urinals, to a tight and darker funnel, nighttime lighted in shades of orange or grey-blue that seem capable of infinite dimming before darkness: a double airlock of reticulated glass veils the ultimate, shrouding mystery that is the steam itself, ensuring a strangely indifferent intimacy as clients squeeze by each other on their way in and out of this sightless room.

Or, in the Univers, Rue des Bons Enfants, up against the Palais Royal, thick, clear but heavily misted steam-room windows, oblong and body-height, articulate a long, tiled wall, and stare out at the great central piazza of the hot tub and video projections. This plaza itself is surrounded by a maze of corridors and facilities that imitate now the bazaar, now the building site, and from the steamroom you can catch sight of the gazes, connections, hesitations and decisions of the other men as they circulate.

Here, then, the sheets of glass are screens for the projection of fantasy rather than for its discipline or concealment, abetted by the cobalt lights which turn out to have changed from time to time, softly provoking shifts in perception. Beautifully articulated, the spatial relations between steam, hot tub and showers ensure an environment of aural enjoyment as the door opens, and if you close your eyes it might be the Villa d'Este on an overcast and humid day in August, the almost cool tiles slippery to the back or shoulder. And, wandering to the right out of the steam, right again and left, a small lobby lit

by the flickering of a video screen. Then a doorway to the total darkness of the maze, to the always partial acting out of the lurid yet faded projections on the monitor above the door, another passage like that from street to courtyard, from the glance and its fantasy to a moment of its materiality.

Now, here, at this moment and in this context, I insist on this time-space conjunction: the steam takes on its particular quality of being structured like a metaphor; a gasping flow of as-yet uncathected desire; a proto-spermal seepage; a mood of lonely autumn days in the great city, in the fine rain, the blue light of November at six in the evening, a synthesis of these different weathers yet an artificial foil to any in their inadequate naturalness. Slippage from metaphor; the muscles of a thigh tensing itself along the tiling ledge as a hand strays, appreciating the indentations of deep blue shadow, sensing and assessing the reactions to its movement; torsos brushing, not quite touching, or embracing against the window, shadows on neither side of the glass. It is indeed uncanny how much the city outside, or at least its memory, is present in this labyrinth, how a historically specific system of gestures is condensed out of a hecatomb of its previous embodiments, a Paris of lovers, of tenderly deterred desire and temporary meeting. Moreover, unlike Doisneau's famous Kiss, none of this is faked. For only such national symbols need faking, so rarely do they coincide with a sentiment that we might call popular, so crudely must they abject and eliminate all diversity.

But could I be idealising? Though this is for me quite as good as a really fine performance of Fauré, Maggie Teyte for example, the intensely sexual, white half-voice singing '*une vaste et tendre apaisement ...*' I could do without the musak. The same cretinous late disco, with its overly insistent and controlling rhythm, is played in almost any gay establishment in the world, a reminder of that point in the late 1970s when the gay contribution to world culture was held to be dancing well. And probably the men too, were I to find out all of their origins, would turn out mainly to be tourists from Blackpool or Nova Scotia or Perth. Moreover the videos are nearly all American, with hardly one in twenty by France's own porno-maestro Cadinot. But then in his films you can see the condoms getting grubby. And that's a nicety of French gay culture not easily assimilated in these central palaces of Parisian and tourist pleasures, where the ideal of American beauty reigns as a more appropriate French ideal. (At a more off-centre location, such as the leather bar Mec Zone, only a kilometre but another world away towards Anvers, Cadinot is the order of the day.)

Yet, at the same time, even if the ensemble of movements through the corridors and darkrooms is much like that of any metropolitan street, purposive without apparent object, slow and speedy by turn, hesitant and directed, in that collective exaltation of individual will that is the determined, agentless

practice of the city, the cadence is not just like Montréal. Montréal is more regardful, perhaps more friendly and deliberated. It is quite unlike Berlin with all its confounding directness. What Georg Simmel would call eccentricity, that is to say exacerbated individuality, is everywhere exhibited as style, a style of body, whether gym-built or used-up and ragged, a style of partial dress, of draping a towel, wearing street boots or holding a cigarette. Specific to Paris? Residually, and then only perhaps: a different range of relations to the body from what we would see in Chicago, more nervy, uneasy here than in Germany, more creatively edgy than in Australia, even though the boots or jockstraps issue from the same Korean production lines. The city is not the same, nor are its masquerades.

Upstairs at IDM the landing that connects the two blocks of cabins opens out into a three-sided room, some five metres square, high-ceilinged and framed by a narrow *pourtour* (walkway) supported at its corners by Corinthian columns. Early Haussmann, I would guess, a subsequent addition to the building of this one amongst many Restoration and Louis-Philippe cités that are characteristic of the ninth arrondissement. Men lounge on leatherette couches in the ruins of the Second Empire, against a copy of Hockney's painting of a boy getting out of a pool that, cut in three panels, serves to mask the windows. The Key West, near the Gare du Nord, has a similar disjunctive decor, though of a late Haussmannian or Third Republic design. Outlandishly marked by the inordinately high ceilings of the lower floors, the circulation seems rather ant-like. Of course, by the last floor the ceilings have lowered themselves some two metres and so has the sex, more tight clustering under the canopy of the roof spaces. And in the squat metal-barred kennels that must once have been the *chambres de bonne*, sexuality is superabundantly exposed in this sometime fantasmatic space of social difference and sexual repression. If IDM is Paris as a warren, as a contingent cluster of different kinds of space that touch each other and overlap, Key West is rather the vertical mode of social differentiation turned over exclusively to sex as the elaboration of personal castes and preferences.

One historical problem with this *imaginaire* lies in its unresolved involvement with the *beau idéal* of sleaze. In the old days, the days before AIDS on the one hand and the generalisation of gay lifestyle in the city centre on the other, the Parisian sauna was, with the very rare exception, quintessentially sleazy. From the Grands Bains d'Odessa to the Hammam Voltaire, it was not only dilapidated with age but its sociability framed and conditioned in the shadowy past of renunciation, concealment and self-negation. Furtiveness and decay went hand in hand, elaborating their own pleasure it is true, but ill at ease in a city of diminishing shadow and technological modernity. In the 1960s and 1970s the baths seemed like refugees from another epoch, like all those

ageing groceries round Les Halles, after the pavilions had been pulled down, while the first establishments of the young generation had the same kind of peculiar feeling as the Louvre cleaned. The new sauna, despite and because of all its freedom, has lost the relation to the body that interwove the emotion of time-honoured repressions with outmoded and inefficient plumbing. It is hardly sleazy at all. On the contrary, it is pleonasm made material, unfolding an obsessive cleanliness, the endless flow of water and purifying steam; the odours of chlorox and disinfectant rather than those of sweat and bodies. Silent workers, usually African, move through the ever night-time corridors, cabins or labyrinths with torches, rubber gloves and pincers, removing paper towels, condoms, wrappers, wiping, disinfecting couches and floors. The resemblance to the cleaning of the touristic Paris of Chirac's mayoral administration, out there in the sunshine and the drizzle, is more than comic. Though in setting them side by side like this I do risk dallying with the concept of a 'total social fact'.

For one of the facts of the matter is that gay life as a complex social process is the outcome of many determinations. And one of its most elaborate ironies is that having always layered itself in the interstitial spaces of the city, the last few years of Parisian tourism and gentrification have forced it into the reinvention of the liminal, or places of a newly imagined liminality, even as the need to hide has never been less urgent. So if the baths from before they were gay-as-such displayed a deeply historic sleaze, this was cut by a different function, a dysfunctional or counter-hygienic element coded as the exotic movement of social and sexual transgression. And if today a hard won, relatively easy jouissance in one's identity undermines the sleazy and the abject, the circulation in the baths has become more one of an imaginary community than the old identification with oneself as other. Yet the fantasy of self-othering, which is necessarily denied by an identitarian politics of community, remains deeply significant and pleasurable in the historical sediment of being-gay. The signifier sleaze, so difficult to renounce, is re-leased to articulate an internal difference, now within the thing in itself rather than between it and other forms of sexuality. SM sex, leather and fetish now stand on the lonely and knife-edge angle between marginality and fashion to provide gay society with the most accessible image of its own potential for generating otherness, a process of differentiation worked through into the details of the new cruising grounds of Disney's Paris. Here, in the bars and the baths, this takes place within the fabric of a relatively old Paris, an oldness that might range from the medieval cellar to the basement of an early 1970s' apartment block. And it is here that we can find the streets not of a temporally older Paris, but of Vicux Paris itself, of myth.

As we have seen with IDM and Key West, the Haussmannian fabric creates modes of circulation that both enforce the inside/outside relation of old Paris

and invite a quite specific scale of sexual comportments and displays; a demand to furnish the space and a demand to perform it too. Whether in the clean-cut establishment inserted in older buildings like the Unvers, or in the cruising club Docks, sited in a disaffected, concrete-built sauna of the 1970s, or the four-storied, pre-Haussmannian Arène of the quai de l'Hôtel de Ville, once a restaurant and disco, the configuration tends to that of the lost street plan, and to stand in for the figure of a social complexity that now lends itself to sexual diversity as a practical metaphor. A metaphor above all for choice, the desire for an alluring agency that characterises the broader sexual politics of our moment. To move around any of these baths or clubs, where the bar often seems little more than an absolution for the hypertrophic labyrinth, is to navigate from the dungeon to the chambre de bonne, from the caged exhibition of the sexual spectacle to the fragile privacy of the chiffonier's cabin. It is to oversee and to overhear, to be distant in the proximity of a narrow corridor or twisting stair, yet also close in a glance across the crowded bar. It is to stand in little groups, idly lounging, chatting, half regarding or half ignoring some offered spectacle. It matters little whether you do or do not watch in the end, for this spectacle at least has not been paid for, and will repeat itself soon and often. It is to rediscover the vaults and cellars of old Paris lit by an artificial moonlight, but as if they were streets lined with the housing of the poor, badly insulated and weakly lit, the noises of unknown domesticities penetrating the collective passage. Every now and then at the Keller (it was Foucault's place), the oldest of the leather bars, its state of disrepair is underscored afresh. Rougher-still wooden partitions succeed their already rough predecessor, held together by scaffolding, miming stocks and racks and street corners. The backroom is a building site that disintegrates in a cult sacred to the refusal of contemporaneity, new ruins crumbled in contrast to the rest of this gentrifying quartier that has now lost even its name to that of the estate agent generic of 'Bastille'. Nowhere else in Paris could you find so poignantly the experience of the city that flows from Poe to Baudelaire, from Francis Carco to Léo Malet or Jacques Réda.

Yet the circulation in the bars and baths that I have sketched barely figures as an encounter with the involuntary terror of uncanniness. If you stumble against an upturned flooring stone or slip along a tile, it is more likely to be into the man of your dreams than some dreaded presentiment, even though he and it might be one and the same. Rather, it conserves an ideal of the uncanny that has come to be utopian, and which, ironically, is likely to be still further displaced by a politics of gay space that brings us closer still to Tschumi's park. Some recent queer writing, that justly claims and insists upon the right to public sex against the post-AIDS puritanism that plagues the USA, nonetheless tends to do so on the terrain of a demand for recognition that also entails a conventional

designer ethic. Thus in works like *Policing Public Sex: Queer Politics and the Future of AIDS Activism*, we find a design project for sex bar architecture that smooths out the rough and the makeshift, such as the cutting of holes through partitions, so that the furniture matches the desire for an absolute outness on the one hand and an absolute safety of use on the other.⁶ None of this furniture, nor the spaces of circulation, are to mimic the effects of decay or, by metonymy, the residue of an historical abjection. This is not to say that the traditional bar either was or is purposively built; only that its purpose as a style of building traces a history of marginality, and often still does so in a locally rooted and specific *imaginaire*. You have only to compare the strange conflation of industry and outback in the vast warehouse spaces of Melbourne's Club 80 with the utterly dissimilar configuration of not unlike materials into the intimate street corner of the Keller or the shantytown shacks of Berlin's Scheune to get a glimpse of the multiple possibilities of slippage within the same. Rather, it is to suggest that while the current, queer demand for a total moral visibility registers a social and ethical imperative, it also equivocally and necessarily plays out its objectives on the plane of dominant representations. Mistaken in its mode of militant self-affirmation, it offers gay identity for a more complete appropriation by the city of total regulation. In this sense the new, queer architecture, which actually corresponds more closely to the baths than to the leather bars, makes the same kind of claims for the configuration of the city as Tschumi has made for La Villette. Upon the issue of this complex of debates in France and its transmutation into practice will hang the result of this alternative; that the gay circulation of the city will persist as some kind of a relative other to Paris itself, despite the digicode; or that, in the likely case that Paris itself finally becomes no more than an annexe to Disneyland, the gay, now as Disney's French other, will have to rethink itself. That this, in turn, can be thought through the informal and commercial production of architectural space as sexual practice, signals that the very diversity Tschumi wants to bludgeon into life may yet only live without him.

6 Colter (ed.) 1996. See the essays by John Lindell, 'Public Space for Public Sex', and Allan Berubé, 'The History of Gay Bathhouses'.

Americans Go Home: Which is More American, Paris-Texas or Paris-France?

This paper dwells on the relation between an unsatisfactory and inappropriate word, *american*, and an inadequate word, *Paris*. If I spell *american* with a lower case, this is not to universalise it, but rather to reduce its dramatic effect. It refers to something from 'over there', which was of course the title of a First World War song about going to Europe, but which comes to Europe and takes it away again in a circle of exchange that has political, economic, and moral consequences. *Paris* is an inadequate word to denote the variety of discourses and affects to which the city it names has given rise, so that it, the city or the word, lures people into a life that they find it wants them to live. Neither Walter Benjamin in the 1920s and 1930s nor Ned Rorem twenty years later intended to stay more than a few months. Yet both stayed for years – finding in *Paris* an adequacy that today it has taken on anew, despite its extreme modernising, only because in *american* it has once again become 'old Europe'.¹ Incidentally, the word *home* is struck through, other than where cited, because of its proximity to the intolerable concept of the 'nation'.

If you want to take sides, or maybe you have to take sides between different versions of Europe, perhaps between an old one and a new one, it's a difficult thing to do. Old Europe is not terribly appealing, with its perfume of putrefied colonialisms that won't fade away – even in the odour of postcolonial magnanimity; its delusions of national glories ripped from an unjust history and their concomitant guilt; its ethical subject often shakily constructed on the ruins of quite recent fascist dictatorships and their preceding Enlightenment.²

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- 1 I too have stayed with *Paris* far too long, and while I would like to thank Keith Reader for inviting me to give this paper at the conference 'Parisian Topographies' held at the University of Glasgow in July 2003, I hope that it will be the very last of its kind for me.
- 2 It is worth remembering that if the USA always rather liked European fascist generals in either Greece or Spain, some, like Salazar in Portugal, resisted Coca Cola, while the merely Gaullist Charles de Gaulle really sent the *americans* packing.

Some of 'old Europe's appeal, as we know so well, is an effect of the dissatisfaction felt with their apparent history-lessness on the part of North americans, their desire to look elsewhere than in their destruction of the first cultures of their continent – which rhymes oddly with the translation of Fenimore Cooper, all the rage in Paris during the 1820s and foundational for the European detective philosophy of the clue. Or it speaks to the ambivalent memories and equivocal nostalgias of European refugees and migrants in the USA, searching for the before of their exile and the signs of its menace. And the current meaning of a new Europe is, for a reactionary US administration, nothing more or less than the reduction of this palimpsest of effects to the figure for an uncritical and slavish concordance of military interests, through which certain phenomena such as 'postcommunism' or right-wing 'socialism' come to be seen as an instrumental newness. This entails a certain merging of what is and isn't american, a blurring that, for example, makes Prime Minister Blair more like President Bush than Harold Wilson was ever like L.B. Johnson – although if France is still 'old', it's probably rather because President Chirac remains closer to Nixon-the-peacemaker and crook than because he refused to join the war in Iraq. Old France, of the left and right alike, with all its nostalgia for an essential and pure Republican authority, now rips aside the veil of alterity to find in the other's face the image of its own myopia. The mystery will remain, however: what was there before the unveiling can no longer be told, has no space to voice itself in this story of equality, fraternity, and so on.

What is it today to be told 'yankees go home'? What is it, in a time of globalised cultures and crumbling and thankfully violated boundaries, for an enunciation to occur of the order of 'moi français(e)', 'toi yankee', a proper enunciation in the manner of Benveniste, in which the terms hold even at the infinitesimal moment of enunciation so that one knows that is that, just that, French and american? Maybe no more than a moment in which one inhabits the culture industries in one way rather than another – rap, techno, hip hop, *rai*, and even *chanson française* – and by this token hardly belonging to nation at all: unhomey, homeless music.

In a collection of essays entitled *Settling the Score*, the now eighty-year-old american composer Ned Rorem recalls one of his many conversations with Francis Poulenc in the early 1950s.³ He shows Poulenc some settings he has done of poems by Ronsard. Rorem is then a young american musician on the make in Paris, a protégé of Nadia Boulanger and well enough connected to lodge in the hotel of Marie-Laure de Noailles, with whom he entertains a close

3 Rorem 1983, and 1988.

and somewhat violent relationship. It was a social relationship, I hasten to say, as I am not sure that I would set out from Rorem here were he not gay, and not only gay, but a major chronicler of gay life before the concept of 'being out' had a name. It is through a thoroughly gay episteme, an outlook that seems terribly lucid, insouciant, and calm by the side of Genet's grim onto-homosexuality, that he writes the liaisons and the deliaisons between his being-american and his being-in-Paris. Sometimes his insights have the quality of a necessary banality, accepting stereotypes and feeling from or through them as he works his way from one man to another.

So what is deposited from his life in his diaries and other memoirs is a fleeting image of something that, in Jean Genet or André du Bouché, would be a whole novel – in the mode of a high tragic and Catholic abjection that, no doubt, Rorem is happy to sample in his tricks as something that France has to offer – an Algerian quickie in the Harp Street (in american in the text), or in a *cage d'escalier* in a smarter area. Rather like Klaus Mann in Amsterdam after his exile from Germany at the time of Hitler, Rorem reveals the social workings of a city as an afterthought, as a residue in an account of the quotidian and in a narcissistic reflection on his own artistic progress that is already musically French, and French in desire as well. In the mirror space of Paris he sees himself from both sides at once.

Life in Paris is a dream, as much as was to be the painter Gerry's life in Minelli's *An American in Paris*. Rorem has the high life and the low life, a certain experience of Greenwich Village, I suspect, originally out of Parker Tyler, but in French. This is no bad thing, not only because it is two things, but because in their enunciation, in the word, the musical note, the sex-act, they merge and emerge at the same time. Rorem reflects, '[were] Jimmy Baldwin's roots really in Paris or were mine for that matter, rather than in Dakar or Oslo? Yes; artistically; although his beloved Gide was filtered through Harlem while my Gide grew up in Chicago's Hyde Park ...'⁴

And if Rorem goes a little deeper into that space than Gerry/Gene Kelly in Minelli's film, it is not because Minelli is any less aware of the fiction and its uses; on the contrary, he is in some ways, especially in the opening fifteen minutes of the film with its insistent use of reverse shots and perverse reflections, even more acutely conscious of the returning and warping gaze, of oneself from almost behind the gaze, and shot by shot he keeps this on the surface of the film. Rorem deepens the fiction in a different practice of his art as well as of sexual difference. One night, 'On the Boulevard des Batignolles on Sunday

4 Rorem 1994, p. 396.

night', Rorem notes, 'was a bicyclist who (walking) turned three times to look at me then vanished. For my part this was a love I will never forget. Unhad love is sweeter'.⁵ This could be any city, but the observation is apt in a one that so emphasises possession in its sexual imago. Lack is sweeter ... or even the condition of love.

On another night he records the Capital's response to the execution of the Rosenbergs, a city in turmoil, slogans and graffiti everywhere, *Americans go home* ... He doesn't hear it as addressed to him, who lives chez Noailles: 'I went to France because I was already French, not the other way round. It is not the going home (though we may never have been "home" before) that makes homebodies of us; we are homebodies so we go home'.⁶

Anyway, Poulenc warns Rorem about getting too involved in the setting of French poetry – reminding him that they, the French, do it perfectly well. Rorem, as an american, is very much a voice for a complex French melodic modernism as a valid contemporary mode of composition to set against serial, electronic or noise-driven modernisms, and part of his response to Poulenc, out of the respect inherent in the musical choices he has thus made, is to take his point and to get on with some Whitman settings instead.

This is a preoccupation: how to make two things work so as to reveal each other, a process of hybridising that is and is not identical with imperialism and not unlike the problem of *francophonie* itself, and its displacement of supposedly national characteristics, histories, or other collections of symptoms into each other's production of the word – unlike the Gershwin of *An American in Paris*, a score that seems to be simply an imperial self-idealising that renders the film's potential subtleties into something less than they might have been.

One thing that interests Rorem here and in his other writing and listening, and that, I think, is not far removed from his sexual exploration of men *and* mores, is the notion of a singing mother-tongue, and its attendant problem of what it means if one has failed to acquire one's 'own'. So many american singers never learn to sing american, but perfect their French or German accents to sing unaccented. (As it happens this very postwar period is legion with exquisite american sopranos and mezzos who specialise in Duparc, Canteloube, and Hahn – Gladys Swarthout and Nan Merriman for example. And these women, with their exquisite pronunciation of the final 'e' and subtly breathed liaisons might be heading for Alice Kaplan's *French Lessons*, well *avant la lettre* ...) Rorem's thinking about his work raises the question of when in a process is

5 Rorem 1983, p. 91.

6 Rorem 1994, p. 382.

something a gesture of effacement or the dissolution of a boundary. His own americaness is sublimated in a musical style that prefers the modernism of Les Six to the sonic world of Cage, the american avant garde and its French version in the figure of the young Pierre Boulez.

Go home! Twice it is told him, in different ways, once by the Rosenberg demonstrators, once by Poulenc's considerate advice; but sexually, socially, and musically he stays, if ever he left home for, as we have seen, he was French before ever he went to France.

This is a beginning of some kind, for a topology of something French and something american that is not a rerun of Jamesian endlessness or the jeremiad of americanisation.

But if what I *had* wanted to do in this paper was to enable myself to find a way of continuing to talk about Paris, then it was to disclose and to connect some points of departure that would enable a fresh figure of the City to emerge from the ruins of historical tedium. A tedium, from which Rorem is epiphanically free, induced by the hypertrophy and inappropriate universalising of the concept of the Haussmanian, on the one hand, and the Benjamin industries on the other, brought together with the gross inadequacy of contemporary Paris to sustain the demands of such a conceptual framing.

The former tendency, through the overdetermined and powerfully mythic positioning of Paris as an ur-site of modernity is already, from the middle of nineteenth century, or from Edgar Allen Poe himself, and the impact of Fenimore Cooper on the French detective *feuilleton*, an americanisation of kinds. And if in its most general outcome as a unique model for and perspective on the modern city, it has tended to denature the particularity of many other, different processes of modernity (almost any city from Africa to North america can get to be haussmanised if it has as much as one big avenue driven through the slums or ceremonial way), then its overcoming, through postmodern and postcolonial studies – that is, the attention paid to so many complex models of transformation, their time scales, their symbolic elaboration, their appropriations and misidentifications – is bound to leave Paris as if without its historiographical value. That is indeed its capital value, its nightmare of (being a) dead capital. We can at last look at Paris quite coldly, as no longer a model for very much at all, but rather the figure of a series of projections and radical misrecognitions, americanisms, that have made a kind of world culture out of it, a culture that has anyway been disrupted or lost its relation to the object.

In this event the Benjamin industries take on their profile and we begin to get some sense of the way in which the estrangements and homeliness of Ned and Gerry have become, in our own time, syllabus. If we turn Paris against this anglo-americanisation of education and its theoretical models that have been

distilled out of historical figuring, once more it will disappear. At least it will be swallowed down into the monstrosity that is the definition of a *national* capital anywhere today (Dakar, Oslo). But the particularity of Paris's monstrosity will hopelessly dissolve in the mystery behind the veil. What was particular to Paris was, after all, precisely this subordination, the requirement to be a model, an *idéal du moi*, which French political culture now in its turn looks for – and for which it finds no other space than the obscure face of another, difficult other who must in turn be made to look like this projection. The culture industries' version of this desire turns out to be the kitsch of a film like *Amélie* or Tavernier's *Zone Libre* (both subsidised, in the French manner, to be French) where at least the tiresome present can be in its turn effaced by its technological capacity to fake itself as if it were only hollywoodian.

Of course, there is something in Benjamin's work that invites this projection that turns Paris into a monster, or enfolds it. Maybe we can see this better if we remember Adorno's warning about the significance of his project as philosophy. It is on this terrain of the paris-ness of the arcades project and its endless archives that studies of the *flâneur*, for example, the rethinking of the *flâneur* as gendered and so forth, push their shoots and turn into a jungle of syllabus, in which Turin or Manchester or the colonial erection and then devastation of some non-Western city can never be as important as Paris for the concept of modernity. So while the oddity of the *Passagen Werk* as a text about a city remains to be resolved, this remaining is a process of re-viewing Paris as a theoretical object sometimes at odds both with its own histories and their fragile virtuality, as well as with their necessary undoing.

I tried to come to grips with this some time ago in an article addressed to the odd question of why Benjamin never talks properly about Zola – but to no more effect, I think, than Susan Buck-Morss's salutary warnings concerning Benjamin's own evolving pessimism in regard to the figure of the *flâneur*.⁷ The Benjamin industries are no Penelope! What they weave is exponential.⁸ Nonetheless, maybe the fact that a whole new generation of scholars will work in the new national library, at Tolbiac, and never walk out into the historic environment of Benjamin's thinking will come to have its impact; and then either the Arcades will be forgotten, enabling the *Passagen Werk* to achieve its purely theoretical effect. Or the power of syllabus will anyway be such that the Arcades entirely overwhelm the philosophy as the only plenum of Benjamin's

7 My article 'Total Ellipsis' (Rifkin 1996) is included in this volume as 4.2. See Buck-Morss 1989, p. 304 ff. See also Durand (ed.) 2003.

8 'More books on Benjamin and still the pile grows ... Benjamin's prose breeds commentary like vaccine in a lab': Peter Osborne, quoted as the incipit to Coles (ed.) 1999.

meaning, as one now has to *rediscover* them from the Mall at Tolbiac. The academic will become even more like an american tourist.

In relation to all of this, then, Paris today is unworthy in the way that objects may come to fall short of a theory that embraces them: rather pokey, provincial, and dreadfully subdued by tourism, as well as by well-meaning gestures of appeasement like the summertime beach along the quais: it consoles a little for the spread of those general processes of sameness that are the mark of urban social change the world over, like the wall of glass from Jean Nouvel's Institut du Monde Arabe down to Tolbiac. Or, at a more vernacular level, it is bullied by redundant detailing, like the decorative gateways added to the old street markets – superfluous denoting of what is already named and known, phatic rituals of pleonasmic recognition. One dreams instead a sign that finally proclaims 'ceci n'est pas le marché Montorgueil/Daguerre/Duhesme', although here the risk is one of faking nostalgia itself. I feel no nostalgia for the Arcades prior to their refiguring as a stock-in-trade of cultural studies: none at all, although I must have enjoyed wandering through them before they had become as cluttered with endless little redundancies of theoretical overproduction as they had once been cluttered bits and pieces of the marvellous as in Aragon's submarine vision of *Le paysan de Paris*. If anything their current buzz and clientele have probably made the Arcades more like what they were in 1830 than what they had become in 1962: that is, thoroughly frequented by a well-enough heeled middle class in search of ornaments, clothes, and food – even if one now subtracts the users of the one-time BN and extend the map to include the Passages Brady and Prado. These last have long been the terrain of an anglo-phone subculture closer to Brick Lane than to vieux Paris, another reminder of how the appearance of the colonial subject forces the metropolis to desert itself and become another, or die of asphyxiation.⁹

But I do miss going over there, to the first *arrondissement*, intending to work in the old reading room, but deciding not to work once I have arrived, and having nonetheless plenty else to do. Get to Tolbiac and decide you don't want to work – well, you can watch any of 11 or so commercial movies and eat a *prix fixe* that includes a ticket to the next one; it will all be for the good of studies in contemporary cinema. If ever there were an american-type mall in Paris this is it, though the access to popcorn is pretty poor. But american it is, and as such it is the price of forgetting another american Paris, the Paris, or was it america, of *Irma la douce*, for example – that desperate attempt to hold the old tropes

9 Now the set of a trendy film set in Indian Paris, but for the international interest in this area, see www.outlookindia.com.

of gallantry, normative sexual adventure and the friendly *flic* in place. And the library itself, of which the main glory is certainly its website, is as good an example as we have of a Fordist approach to the organising of how we acquire book knowledge.

But it is working well – on my one visit to escape the 2003 summer's unbreathable air, I bumped into four persons I had not expected to see at all in a few days' visit to the city. Yet all of them were academics in French studies of one sort or another, also hiding out from the heat, and who would be spending plenty of the next year in the real american malls of the imperial wastelands where they work. As the continuities become more perfect, it seems worth remembering that the Arcades are not the simple origin of the mall which is their corruption, but that the fantasising of america as a model for France and Paris has a long and honourable history, at least as old as the Arcades themselves, as we know from Tocqueville's or Champfleury's admiration.

How then can we be sure that the problem of americanisation is an interesting one in any way? And is it not anyway permissible to think that Paris and France are so americanised in so many ways that the problem is not one of an economic process that has happened and must be regretted but rather of the means of imagining either that it has not, or that within this there is complexity of some kind? It is not to do with the number of Starbucks per square kilometre that americanises, as in London, but with a way of putting up with things, with the weird misroutings of the concept of a nation and its politics and cultures through a map of expectations of the national.

The idea that there is something French or Parisian about the strip of vitamin shops, Chinese takeaways, minor jewelry and tat distributors, small supermarkets and cafes whose food comes from some processing plant in the suburbs, that stretches from the Place de la Concorde to Père Lachaise, down the rue de Rivoli, Saint Antoine and up the rue de La Roquette, is as about as odd as feeling that there is an essence of regional identity in the strip malls of the far north end of Chicago – even if, as Sartre's observations on american cities so clearly show, the way in which the streets come into the world, historically, purposively and so forth, are actually profoundly different. For in the end Chiracian city planning and its economic character, in the broader framework of Mitterrand's monumental politic, is a norm of normalisation, or rather a sub-norm of the norms already offered by Disneyland, CA or the american strip mall. Chirac will go down in history not so much as a good anti-american, but rather as a great mayor, alongside Daly of Chicago and Giuliani of New York, and for much the same results. Remember that he was the first mayor since the Paris Commune – and it has been under his reign that the city has set about to complete the removal of signs of the *friche* from any space that can be bet-

ter furnished with commercial infill or public monuments – thus irreversibly undermining the possible materiality of its historical *imaginaire* as a city of a certain bohemian otherness. That had been in its time one of the vectors of class difference, especially in Benjamin's discussion of conspiracy, and in that respect of crucial importance in the knotting together of ideologies of modernity.

Two trivial things struck me in the hot summer of 2003: one was that on the Place Léon Blum, near where I live in Paris, the French fries from McDonalds are probably now slightly better than they are at the Café Rey – my main standby for goodish food, regional meat, and tra la la, where they – the fries – now definitely come as preformed pulp from the suburbs. After all, the Rey is not customer-sensitive in the same way as McDonalds, which is now committed to use products from the *terroir* of France, just as in England it advertises the brand of potatoes with which it makes the fries. The Rey has history on its side and now, like so many cafes that have been done up (it has the overstated and anxious newly typical décor of bookshelves and a few old novels). It successfully takes in a thirty-something public who previously spurned it, while oldies and teenagers go to cheaper McDonalds. For the Rey, its evident authenticity is its protection from attention to quality.

That struck me, as did the phenomenon that McDonalds's great critic and sometime hero for the techno movement, José Bové, had the temerity to pronounce against the Teknival, a form of worldification that has been around at least as long as *anti-mondialisation* itself and for which the peasant leader has as much feeling as did Jesse Helms for Robert Mapplethorpe. At a certain point, however, the organisers of the main techno festival, the Teknival tried to set themselves at his service and in support of his rights. It is one thing to stone McDonalds – without for all that being anti-american as Bové once insisted – and I am constantly surprised that it doesn't happen more frequently; it is another to throw brickbats at techno because it and its people might pollute your sacred land of protest in the Larzac, if you see it mainly as a source of litter, with all its american horror of fast food and cheap snacks. For there is something very american about this adoption of a posture resembling the frontier farmer, or a figure from Andrew Wyeth, that americanises just a little, and just here, the very core of the politics of antiglobalisation. Of course, any self-assured and committed *teufer* (slang for a festival goer) likewise denounced that summer's Teknival as ferociously and in much the same terms as Bové has treated the Big Mac, taking it to account for its excessive massification and its consequent subjection to a centralised, panoptical control. Bové and Techno touch each other for a moment: the Teknival supported the peasant leader in his struggles but split finally because they were too unclear in the wrong way.

But, alas, that is neither here nor there. Techno is neither regional nor regionalist, as befits a dominant form of the entertainment industry, but its enactment or execution is a sum of multiple particularities that are both necessarily local and a questioning of the very concept of the local. In a summer number of *Libération* an *ex-teufer* lamented the decline of the techno party, of what had been festivals 'qui ont défriché les espaces de liberté qu'on arrivait à voler à la société du spectacle ...' ('which cleared free spaces that were being stolen from the "society of spectacle"'). In this light, we begin to see Bové and his allies, who wanted above all for the festival to be put on arid land – finally on an unfinished highway – as part of a process for the regularising and control of a once romantic and radical gesture of the fugitive implantation of an essentially and deeply urban music in the countryside: in effect, a force in the process of rendering it even more fully commercial and within the bounds of civil and economic laws. If there is, or was, something Detroit, or London, or Parisian about this music, it was not just in the definition of an urban-national mode as in its displacement from the need for precisely such a definition, its constitution as a moment of movement, as being nomad, if you like, as the extraterritorial. The techno culture of a capital city needs not just its huge parades as in Berlin, but the projection into the countryside as an actually performed image of its specific liberties on the screen of the countryside as other. In this sense, the techno festival is a figure for the renewal of an urban *imaginaire* as the historical condition for the very survival of the countryside, but in the particularised performances of a world entertainment industry that is not going to go away – at least not under conditions that we would recognise as economically, aesthetically, or socially viable.

It is important to note, in this respect, how much the intellectual energy of Parisian life is, in recent years, driven through the pages of youth and music culture magazines like *Inrockuptibles*, *Technikart* or *Nova* as well as the more old-fashioned bohemian *Vacarme*, rather than through a forum such as *La Quinzaine Littéraire*, *Lignes*, or *Débat*. Likewise, it is important to note how this shift has resulted in a conscious gendering and ethnicising of the mainstream, and in a consciousness of all kinds of other differences at the quotidian level of the text that the higher echelons of Parisian intellectual life are far from even perceiving.¹⁰ This brings the intellectual *habitus* into a configuration more like

10 The literature on Techno and Rap in these journals is immense, as it has become in mainstream newspapers as well. In *Le Monde* or *Libération* they are totally normal, without for that matter appearing to bring about any change in concepts of the national, the ethnic, gender, or whatever. For TTC, hear *Ceci N'est Pas Un Disque*, Big Dada Disques, 2003.

that of the anglo-american in terms of its preoccupations and innervations, but without which the specificity of a contemporary Parisian intellectual formation would be seen as little more than that of its well-established entropies. So it is in the procedures, affects, and social differences of Rai, Techno, Rap, and other immigrant musical forms, which also have their own nomadic histories, that a crucial refiguring of the city, and by *synechdoche*, of the country can occur in the very questioning of their particular value. The inheritor of Rorem's concern with the singing voice is not so much a contemporary Poulenc or the musicians of IRCAM, but a rap group like TTC, which precisely twines together sounds and musical phonemes that otherwise would never have met up.

If the conceptual world of the peasant leader has no horizon around this form of the present and the future, which is a proper space for the enunciation of differences and the temporary anchoring of subjects in a world system, then it participates in another world altogether; that of an isolation, for which the word *america* is paradigmatic. Ironically, as I have insisted, americanisation may proceed as a morale, as a political economy of thinking; its limits and its inertial yet aggressive ethnocentrism reproduce themselves like an invading capital.

But to loop back to enrich this irony yet further, let us note that Bové is joined in his countryside by none other than Renaud Camus at his chateau in the Gers. From here the sometime master of the nighttime paths of gay Paris holds court to a high culture in the old mode and conducts the affairs of his reactionary, anti-immigration political party, *In-nocence*. Home, we can say, is in the countryside and in an international culture carefully restored to the purity of its national components. He is embroiled in the affair Camus, in which he is accused of anti-Semitism, something largely a function of his assertion, in his diaries and other writings, of a neo-Drumontian notion of Frenchness that will enter into a cosmopolitan relation with other cultures only on this basis, where the national is somehow fantasised as free from its accretions.

Thus, Camus has migrated from the terrain of a wholly new, post-Barthesian grammar of gay experience to the fusty stupidity of a regional discourse of vulgar cultural elitism, exclusion and racial purity in which the gay, as with Pym Fortuyn, becomes the opportunistic ally of an old and incompetent republicanism that is also an old imperial mentality. The only place in Paris for Camus now, as he recognises, would be in the Académie, which has not as yet opened its doors to him, though he got eight votes last time he came up for consideration. To say that Camus was ever of a progressive turn of mind would be an error, but even as he smells of old Europe, its separation from america seems like a fake, the faking of a home.

The figure that Camus fashions for us over so many thousands of pages is theoretical – the subject that escapes its own pleasure that escapes its own subjecthood in a round of elegantly figured *jouissance*. Its absence, if you like, is only in the text, in the way that text works; the cumshot is a phrase, not an epiphany, in its uncomplicated presentness and its iteration in which the next is the immanent substitute for the now. In this way, as I have argued elsewhere, Camus was able to reverse the traditional tonalities of the map of 'homosexual' Paris from the dark, tormented sounding of the abject and abjected subject, with all its specific and wonderful and outmoded pleasures in the manner of Genet, to something transparent, quotidian, but utterly non-epiphanic and resembling the bright light of american outness foretold by Rorem.

Tricks was on a different scale from New York or San Franciscan gay writing because its grammatical involutions and suspenses and the syntax of the Parisian street or bar or cruising ground met in a way that marked desire differently from, let us say, the missed heartbeats of Andrew Holleran's New York or the american Jewishness of a Lev Raphael. Its americanism was to be more out than out, but to conceal this improbable Parisianism in post-Barthesian writing – or, should I say, in Barthesian writing of a genre that he, Camus, invented and that resembles a techno-enunciation. But if we are to think of the city as entering writing at different historical moments, and if we are to track the poetics and the sexual politics of just gay writing from Gide to Camus, we can see the multiplicity of thinking the figure of the city through the modes of representing its sexualities. And we can see the way in which it, the city, comes to be seen on account of them and as one of their effects. As with Rorem, this may never have to do with that place as nation or as home.

That is not a new thing to say, I know, but I want to repeat it, for it remains a proposition of some power and of some perversity. This form of visibility – of the figuring of a city through this set of ideas and affects – this particular form of allegory may be fixed: for example, by a force that requires it to be available as the confirmation of a subjecthood. Obviously, in the fifteen to twenty years following the war, it is what makes Paris visible in the work of Minelli, which very rapidly adapts even the nuances of social change to its historically normative form of narrative or allegory and reemerges as even more fetishistically fixated in, let us say, *Irma la douce*. Old Europe is anyway a function of this america.

Camus, then, knows that as a literary form his Paris is lost to him and he to it: in his diary for the year 2000, entitled *κ310*, he notes a report given to him of a meeting at the bookshop Mots à la Bouche, at which Guillaume Dustan has been speaking of his collection Rayon Gai (published with Balland – now discontinued for better or for worse):

Au cours du débat qui a suivi, quelq'un dans la salle a demandé à Dustan s'il publierait, éventuellement, un livre de Camus ... Certainement pas!! A répondu Dustan, Camus c'est bon jusqu'à 82–83. Tricks très bien, Journal d'un voyage en France, c'est déjà plus tout à fait ça. Après c'est de la littérature bourgeoise, ce culte des valeurs bourgeoises. Plus de sexe. Ça m'intéresse pas.¹¹

[During the discussion that followed, someone in the audience asked Dustan if he would consider publishing one of Camus's books ... Certainly not! Dustan replied. Camus was good until '82 or '83. Tricks, good, diary of a journey in France, already it is no longer completely that. Later it's bourgeois literature, this cult of bourgeois values. No more sex. That doesn't interest me.]

Camus notes this, that no one objects to the outrage, and then goes on to an elegiac critique of the decline of culture into cultures, music into musics: everything we, in the anglo-american university, know as cultural studies and that we celebrate as progress. (Look, for example, at Didier Eribon's heroic attempt to place French gay studies within the field of a theory of subculture – something that I think we now find to be mechanistic and inappropriate for a discourse on diversity.)¹² Dustan's and Camus's Paris inevitably come to diverge through the commercial developments of gay culture and social life over the twenty years that mark the time between the beginnings of their literary career, as well as the dramatic passage through the onset and assimilation of AIDS – another process that was quite different in Paris than it was, say, in London or New York.

Thus, the emergence of Dustan, not from the literary left, so to speak, but from the sexual techno-left, as much as a reporter/opinionmaker in a free scene and sex guide *em@le* is from a complex and introverted spatial structure of a fully developed gay economy – in all senses of that word too – the Freudian and the Marxian, whose margins are generated from within its drives and mechanisms rather than from the position of an overall social or literary marginality. Neither a secret enclave as in the old days of *Arcadie*, nor a voice from critical distance, however out, from Hocquenghem to Camus, the contemporary enclave of *gaietude* is itself a central spectacle of a spectacular society, and in this way Paris is no more or less of a holiday-style choice than any other major city in Europe.

11 Camus 2000, p. 289.

12 Eribon 1999.

In this the literary figure of a Dustan can be located quite directly as a figure for a style – of sexual performance and its appropriate prosody. Dustan proclaims this to be that of the ‘greatest living writer’, Brett Easton Ellis, whose grammatical and figural savagery he translates, via Sarraute, into the wholly unamerican activity of total, bareback sexual freedom – a kind of sexual equivalent of slow food in its reversion to nature, or, rather, to the second nature of urban anarchy. Here again we have a view of the city that interweaves different possible structures for the subject, which is clearly articulated through a network of ideas, which in a sense belong somewhere else, or here, in Paris, at the risk of disfiguring them, appropriating them and also of transforming the image of the city.¹³

In trying to point to this enunciative, textual notion of a relation between cultures, which finds itself best figured in the international culture industries themselves, typified by rap or techno, that are an extreme form of their diffusion, and in underlining the multiplicity of subject forms that traverses them, I hope only to have drawn one form of attention to the faded quality of the terms of our discussion: France, america, and so on. France or French and america or american in my suggested topology are neither adequate spaces of enunciation, proper grounds for the emergence of a contemporary political, aesthetic, or moral subject, and discussion surrounding their degree of each-otherness tends itself to nostalgia for yet another lost time that never was. In that sense, we may as well all have long ago gone home.

13 For Dustan, see an *entretien* at <http://www.fluctuat.net/livres/interview/dustan.htm>; and for typical writing see either Dustan 1988 and 1999, or 2001.

PART 4

Alternatives to the Grander Schemas, or Resistance to the Critique of Grand Narrative as a Form of Grand Narrative



Down on the Upbeat: Adorno, Benjamin and the Jazz Question*

This essay is written with the occasion in mind. The tenth anniversary of *Block* may well be more important than the bicentenary of the French Revolution.¹ For if the celebrations of the latter could be seen as little more than the superfluous fetishising of temporal inevitability or the opportunistic rerun of well staged political conflicts, the survival of *Block* is the register of a moment in intellectual life that has not yet passed. Its fifteen issues have registered a decade of the expansion of radical ideological/cultural critique that has at the same time been accompanied by a growing threat to and reduction of its social and economic base. Very largely this has been in the so called public sector of higher education that expanded more or less continuously from the 60s up to the first series of attacks on it by the Callaghan government in 1976. It may now be that the changes of the next few years, particularly in the new educational dystopia of the now ex-public sector, undermine this social formation to the extent that its work is damaged or becomes impossible. In that case *Block* will come to represent in a particularly condensed way the virtues of the old-fashioned pursuit of disinterested knowledge in a peculiarly modern form: for no one should really wish to argue that it is useful to the taxpayer. Certainly not the type of taxpayer duped into voluntary immiseration by more dramatic forms of privatisation than that of the Polytechnics.

Therefore this piece will not take up any such serious or useful issues. Instead I want to engage with some of the recent manifestation of postmodern theorising of which *Block* has been a patron, and to do this through a consideration of Theodor Adorno, the Jazz question, and the Benjamin-Adorno correspondence on Benjamin's work in progress in the late 1930s.² My reasons are twofold.

First published as 'Down on the Upbeat: Adorno, Benjamin and the Jazz Question', *Block*, 15, 1989

* One image omitted.

1 *Block*, No. 13, 1989.

2 This essay is a try-out of arguments and materials in a booklength work in progress, *Street Noises*, a study of the inter-war Parisian entertainment industries and of their historiographical and cultural significance. The sources referred to are as follows: Adorno 1982b; Adorno 1974, p. 42; Adorno 1987, particularly the Introduction and p. 124, 'Cognitive Character';

One is that this field of debate is, as we know, one of the unavoidable parameters of discussion on levels of culture. It crops up all the time in my own current work, which is about the years in which Adorno and Benjamin were writing. It therefore has a piquancy as a period piece in itself. The other reason is that it provides an opportunity to reengage some of the problems of totalities in cultural and social analysis that will not go away on account of any amount of extravagantly lugubrious relativism in the style of Jean Baudrillard.

It has now become almost as wicked to show even trace symptoms of still believing in 'expressive totalities', or the 'referent' as it once was to show residual signs of 'Stalinism'. This seems sadly limiting. Having said this, I will not engage in a reading of, or a heavily muscled argument with, scholars more expert than I on Adorno or Baudrillard, or whoever. I will hardly mention them, though I will signal as a starting point Susan Buck-Morss's remarkable essay, 'The Flaneur, the Sandwich Man and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering'. This is a crucial attempt to locate Benjamin in '30s culture, that I discovered after I had embarked on my own, but which now informs many aspects of this work. Otherwise this is going to be a bit of empirical bricolage with high theory exercised on the terrain of some French justice archives and popular cultures between the last two world wars.

Finally I now find it important to rework attitudes to the values of art at a point when these are likely either to be destroyed and discredited as unprofitable, or recuperated by the most atavistic strata of the cultural establishment in the style of *Modern Painters*. Discussions around types of autonomy and aura/loss of aura need repeated rehistoricising in order to reaffirm that the effects of cultural criticism and deconstruction need not entail the loss of the human subject in its eminent sociability. The choice of ground for critical dispute, let us say high culture v. low culture, does not in itself predicate the negation of the value of either one of its terms, as I suspect Adorno himself believed.

For, in his essay on Jazz, Theodor Adorno launched one of the most critical and in some ways most effective assaults on mass culture and the culture industries. A critique very different from that of an Ortega y Gasset. For it bases its defence of art against (mass) culture not so much on an openly elitist assertion of the status of art as the rightful property of a social stratum – and a devil-

Adorno 1977, pp. 110–41 for the Adorno-Benjamin correspondence; Buck-Morss 1986 (this is the text of her contribution to the 1983 Benjamin conference in Paris. Another innovative piece from the same conference, and also in *NGC*, is Wohlfarth 1986); Lefebvre, 1977; Archives Nationales de France, dossiers banaux of the sous-series of BB18 for 1900–1940. No names are used in quotations, as these remain restricted. All information on newsstand regulations is taken from these, and is here represented in a very incomplete form.

take-them consignment of the mass to cultural non-being, as on an assertion of the philosophical and social value of art as a critical human activity. Adorno's objections to Jazz are focused on a homology between the regressive musical form of a type of performance that claims to be free, expressive of emotion and avant garde, with a structure of social submission to a society that requires a knee-jerk assertion of individuality as the form of its utter acceptance. Probably it would not be far wrong to say that really he sees Jazz fans as the subjects – in the sense of subjected – of a fascism of the intellect and feelings.

The aim of jazz is the mechanical reproduction of a regressive moment, a castration symbolism, 'Give up your masculinity, let yourself be castrated', the eunuch like sound of the jazz band both mocks and proclaims, 'and you will be rewarded, accepted into a fraternity which shares the mystery of impotence with you, a mystery revealed at the moment of the initiation rite.'³

This viewpoint seems to be difficult to reconcile with any approach to mass cultures that enables us to understand how they might articulate the living out of some kind of social reality that is not one of the utmost pessimism, an unlimited living out of dupedness in a half-light of the cretinising effects of false feelings and delusion. Indeed it goes very well with the dithyrambic gloom of the 'Cultural Industries' section of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*⁴ as well as with some of the more biting comments on day-to-day human relations in *Minima Moralia* – such as the paragraph on presents, of which the pessimism is self-evident:

Even private giving of presents has degenerated into a social function exercised with rational bad grace, careful adherence to the prescribed budget, sceptical appraisal of the other and the least possible effort ...⁵

Nor is this position only applicable to Jazz. It extends to the performance of all forms of music, whether Beethoven or Schoenberg himself. 'From the beginning Schoenberg's music has hovered in the vicinity of cognition. This – and not dissonance – has been the basis upon which he has been rejected by so many ...'⁶ And it is this quality that the modern consumer does not hear in the

³ Adorno 1982.

⁴ Adorno and Horkheimer 1979.

⁵ Adorno 1974.

⁶ Adorno 1987, p. 214.

routines of listening to older music. Performance, especially through a medium, be it the gramophone, the radio or the concert hall that breaks the concentration of the audience from the intended logic and structure of the score, opening out into a world of social values – the snobbism of buying the ticket – and consumption. Art is not to be consumed, or if it is, it becomes mere culture.

At the same time this ruthless refusal of culture is related to some of the most complex and difficult of his analyses of the virtues of the modern in the production of art as Adorno saw it to be represented by Schoenberg on the one hand and deserted by Stravinsky on the other. There then, in the *Philosophy of Modern Music*, he comes close to expounding something like the alienation effect of Brecht, but in a perverse form. The device or procedures that can be deployed in a popular artwork to dispel the sentimental illusions of reality in realism, to permit the viewing, as if from the outside, of the processes of the production of that reality, are reinvested in the autonomy of the modern work of art. In Adorno's comparison of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, it is clear that he sees the former as refusing the possibility of an imaginary or illusory completion in the internal relations of the artwork of the unity of subject and object, while with Stravinsky the illusory wholeness that he offers dulls the critical effect that is the virtue and the obligation of modern art, leaving the listener prey to believing in an organic completion of the work of art in the fabric of society/nature through simple topicality. Actually, this is very difficult to follow at times, and one has to infer some meanings of very dense formulations from the sense of other writings, such as his essays on Wagner, where precisely this supposed organic unity of the myth, the music and the ultimate truth of a society is under attack. However, when Adorno criticises Wagner, or when he more than praises Mahler or Schoenberg, he treats music as a central and essential form of philosophical practice, a working of thought on the world. This is its importance. Mass music or popular musics of the entertainment industries are not to be thought as having this status as philosophy.

The reason for starting with this self-consciously problematic material is twofold. First, I find that, along with Henri Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life*,⁷ Adorno offers one of the most systematic critiques of mass culture of a kind that does not lapse into the sentimentality of understanding the phenomenon – the 'to understand is to forgive' of some of the seventies analyses of pop and subcultures that came out of Birmingham. Or that, equally, does not lapse into the anguished search for the intellectual subject as properly

7 Lefebvre 1958, and 1961.

and correctly gendered/classed/raced – a search that these days repetitively deconstructs or reconstructs the spectacle of popular cultures as a valid site of self-expression regardless of the damage done to the theory of signification that underlies its value as a search. The space reserved for the intellectual by Adorno in the correspondence with Benjamin is unambitious, but also it is not confused. However far he might have been from Benjamin or from Barthes in an understanding of the complexity of the production of meaning, he suggests means of resisting the diminishing returns of the circular pursuit of one's own tail as Other, or vice-versa. In addition, with Adorno, as in Lefebvre, one can find many of the themes that have really come into their own with the rise of Franco-Italian postmodern hyperreality theory, but here they are still rooted in a serious leftism, rather than in the free-ranging will of the super-television professor of the type Umberto Eco or Baudrillard.

In a way, then, I find that in my own recent researches on the mass cultures of the inter-war period in Paris – and I am not making any special pleading for the period, it is just one that I study – Adorno is useful in being systematically critical of this type of cultural production. The chilling, theoretical distancing that his ideas effect provides some immunity to the fatally attractive sounds and textures, of voices, violins and accordions, the inflections of sung French, the urban sound-stage that seems to have been at the origins of modern radio-phony with its complex of levels and overhearings. One aspect of popular songs that they share with the highest of high art culture is a precision in the placing of emotional nuance in poetic pronunciation, and it is in part for this reason that they can be sung in the same programme together. But because of the common beauty of the text and the pronunciation – a beauty often self-consciously shared by the writers and singers – it is too easy mechanically to collapse the types into each other. Adorno makes it more difficult to fall into the trap of seeing an overtly continuous, homogeneous culture.

But, at the same time his offering is useless. Useless because of the way in which his ideas are constructed around the difference between what he calls art and what he calls culture, an integral field of intellectual endeavour and an anthropological field of the routines of the industry, of its domination and subordination. Taking another of his writings, for example, his work on Mahler, it is possible to argue that his respect for the original text (score) is one that eliminates the significance of performance as a remaking of the text that does not necessarily entail its degradation. This is typified in his insistence on original movement orders, abhorrence of reconstruction etc., but we do not need to go into this – only to draw attention to the limitation of a tendency to fetishise the plenitude of the relation intention/score. In short, we need Barthes as well as Adorno.

The fact is that what jazz has to offer rhythmically is extremely limited. The most striking traits in jazz were all independently produced, developed and surpassed by serious music since Brahms. And its 'vitality' is difficult to take seriously in the face of an assembly-line procedure that is standardised down to its most minute deviations.⁸

Generally this is how Adorno sets cultural phenomena against each other, and this leaves the phenomena of mass or popular cultures with little role except that of being the object of social and political fear – an attitude underlined in his and Horkheimer's views of the laughter of the cinema audience and his description Benjamin. Here Adorno appears as the incarnation of Jorge, the villain of Eco's *The Name of The Rose*. But even without complaisance with News International, one nonetheless does need to interrogate the modes in which positions within popular cultures are lived out in ways that map difference into a broad social unity, without fetishising the character of particular cultural unities that fall one or the other side of the definition of kitsch. The *ritournelle*, the repeated short verses of the strophic song, for instance, is a form shared by the classic German *lied* and by the love songs of the music industries, and this simple fact might in itself suggest some questions about the limits or the openness of both to each other and to the conditions of their production and reproduction, and the function of repetition within a unit – a song – and across or within some apparent cultural distances.

The materials of mass cultures themselves suggest ways in which in fact Adorno needs a less rigid reading of them in order to offer the basis for a more expansive understanding of modernity, one that nonetheless realises the effects of his critical method. By disinvesting from the artwork and the artist as intention, and reinvesting his methods in a set of relations within a field of culture, one can come to see that the relation between his theory and the modern artwork suffers from the same illusion of wholeness that he criticises in the bourgeois culture.

In the specifically urban contexts of the production and consumption of mass culture there is a unified but differentiated structure of social relations, in which art, in Adorno's sense, functions as a relation rather than in its integrity. Of course Adorno was acutely aware of this – he was at pains to point out the disintegration of the artwork that follows from the freedom to tune the radio, to catch a sound of something on the gramophone, to pick and choose a favourite movement. But this seems to lead him to systematise his defence of

⁸ Adorno 1982b.

art rather than to value the analytic insights that Benjamin was able to develop through his realisation of the complex sociability of this kind of process. Here lies the conflict between them over Benjamin's 'philology' which has in part to be understood as an attempt to assemble the possible outlines of extensive cultural series whose naming logically precedes the conception of possible totalities, in order to establish some kind of order of differences within them, the articulation of complex but determinate meanings out of difference, and the effects of overdetermination in and out of the possible series of difference. If Adorno is right about the rupture of the modern artwork with the comfort of the referent, then it cannot achieve its autonomy through the revelation of the fact that the only form of progress is to break the illusory unity of subject and object, without also revealing that this is a condition of modern society that must be manifest in other processes than those of the production of art. The value of the autonomy of the modern artwork lies in its being an index of the social, rather than in the status that it confers on the work of art as such. Its value must be in what it keeps doing as a relationship, which is to risk the aura. The artwork need not be like modernity, or what we call modernity, that is to say, the articulations of everyday life, in the sense of being a reflection or representation of it, but it may well bear a philosophical relation to it on the condition that it is not the sole bearer of philosophy.

To return, then, to the social field of mass cultures at a specific moment: let's say in 1925, and give a place, the Palace in Paris, a night, an event and a public, together with a cast of policemen, whose professional interest takes them there to check up on whether or not the spectacle is an outrage to public decency. They have gone to see a performance in a music hall, rather than a theatre, of a classic of the then modern or recent ballet, the *Après Midi d'un Faun*. The performance inevitably plays up the erotic spectacle. It adopts the convenient disguise of high culture – just as does much salon art – for a public who might be in deliberate search of titillation, without either having to declare it to themselves or simply chance upon it in a more salubrious context. But who are playing off the respectability, the Art of Ballet, nonetheless. Policemen are in attendance to weigh up the reported rumours of the obscenity of the performance, to provide the information that may lead to a prosecution for outrage to public decency. They send in their reports, three of them in all, and none of them agree. One says, yes, it is definitely obscene, it contains all the gestures of intercourse and the faun is clearly wiping his (unseen) penis at the end of the dance. The second says that he has seen it before, and this time it is more doubtful than the first, because of the lighting – that heightens the look of some belly dancing. The third is quite sure that it is not obscene, but remarks that it would be more appropriate to a different stage, to a lower order

of café-concert, for example. We are clearly in the world of many meanings. And one of the issues which is very much at stake is not so much the integrity of high art and of public morals, but that of pornography and of outrage. This is a longstanding issue on the implementation of moral law. Since at least the turn of the century the appropriate bureaux have been concerned that it should not be contaminated by art, as this will make it impossible to define and so to prosecute. The closer that art approaches pornography, the nearer you reach the point where the only line that can be drawn between them is at the point of consumption. That itself is at the very nexus of changing social relations, and, in consequence, difficult to patrol with a precise idea of what is really going on there. The three policemen themselves are part of this.

The high ups at the procureur's office are comforted by this division of opinion, because it suggests what they already know – that in this kind of situation, there is no telling what things mean. If some moralist has denounced the spectacle, then it is most likely he or she who has a problem, not the spectacle. Of course there are limits, and in another case, maybe, it's best for the procureur to nip down there and check up on what is meant by nudity for himself. The problem inherent to this kind of posture is that it leads to a terrible all embracing relativism. At every point in the process of the implementation of the law, you have to try to see things from another point of view, another sightline, another moral position. There is rarely a point from which the letter of the law has a secure meaning. Nor, indeed, is there a position from which nudity has a clear and well-marked status. Before the first war, for example, the same female nude counted as art at the Salon, and as pornography when sold as a postcard on a newsstand. This was to stretch judgement, but the administrative integrity of pornography required it. After the war the evolution of social relations, in particular the rise of a stratum of independent, lower-middle-class women, wore down older definitions of the role of women in the definition of decency. And the amusement industries expanded out of the control of strict administrative regulation, making the policing of the growing trend to nudity increasingly impossible. So in his response to the police reports the procureur delivered the following paen to social relativism:

Nothing shows better than this divergence of opinions how delicate, these days, is the question at stake. On the one side this is to appreciate the meanings of the mimes and dances, to decide if they constitute expressions of art, or if they are nothing other than the opportunity to give oneself up in public to obscene gestures and contortions. And on the other, to determine up to what point the nude can be tolerated in the theatre, up to what point it can be thought of as a moving work of art and on the

contrary, what point it stops being a sort of homage paid to the beauty of forms to become a straightforward exhibition of nude flesh liable to excite lascivious ideas amongst the public. As M. *** has remarked, 'I believe there is no more reason to incriminate this particular review than any of the other productions given in all the other music-halls of Paris'.⁹

This then, is not only a world of multiple meanings, but of overdetermination. Narratives and narrative outcomes overlap across diverse levels of social, legal, cultural, entrepreneurial activity, and the integrity of the sign 'art' in Adorno's sense was to perform a multiplicity of relational functions in this *melée*. Indeed it becomes one of the means of valorising the development of what Adorno sometimes calls culture and sometimes kitsch. To seize back a special notion of autonomous art, as he did in the correspondence with Benjamin and in *The Philosophy of Modern Music*, Adorno had to deprive his representation of its progressive characteristics of the potential to become an analytic category within culture. Maybe what threatened him in Benjamin's naming and listing – which was also a very '30s literary activity, was that it offered up the risk of eventually demonstrating that philosophy itself was vulgarised in and through the social process. Their problematic was not unlike that in the mind of the procureur of Paris, who had to draw on the same cultural field, albeit for different reasons and from a different viewpoint – as much it seems that of the upper class *flaneur* as the legal authority.

In what Adorno criticises as the asceticism of his abstention, that is to say his working process of naming and accumulation proper to theory, Benjamin certainly adopted a method that he himself had seen as bourgeois detachment in the nineteenth-century typologies. But, as I have remarked, it was a characteristic of the literary culture out of which he worked. The classification of Paris by social type, street, boutique, quartier, site of historical anecdote, etc. etc. had a hold in a whole range of popular and mass literatures and entertainments, from the Casino de Paris to the worldly romantic novel, from the realist song to the poetic photograph or cinema, and turns up in the language of police surveillance and hygienist statistics. Its polyvalence and its protean character are crucial to its social power. To understand the history of the city as more than a register of representations, each possible representation had to be named in all of its parts, the naming tracing its connections and genealogies.

To return to the types of site that I have opened up above with the Palace, we can continue with the newsstand. In a very real sense, the modern newsstand,

9 (AN, BB18/6173).

with its mass-industrial variety of publications, is authored. It's authored by the publishing industry, by the distributors, by the kiosk holders themselves, who have to choose the range of literature and other items that will ensure them a regular and diversified clientele. As a group they shrugged – or rather, fought off responsibility for readership, which would have made them responsible for what they sold, and played innocent of their client's intentions and desires. But their authorship of the display still passed through the higher level of the regulations that govern display, and the ways in which these relate privacy and freedom with the control of public morals and outrage to decent behaviour. In France, between the beginning of the century and the second war, for example, a whole range of wrappings were evolved that denoted the status and the public of a type of magazine. A cellophane wrapping that would have to be removed in its entirety to get a look. A paper band that concealed part of the cover. Another more ingenious paper band that concealed the cover, and that also prevented the opening of more than a corner of the publication. For each of these different wrappings and their concomitant status, a different position on the stand – high, out of the reach of children, partly hidden, out of the sight of women. For each of these different types of publication, a proper relation of image and title – a nude irrelevant to the headline, for instance, might be an interaction of address, inviting the public for the anodyne fact of the one to the lascivious call of the other. A problematic status for art manuals that included the nude, and for nudist books that masqueraded as art, etc.

The point in saying that this is authored is quite simple. It is to shift the newsstand into the same discursive field as the work of art. It is to underline that the principles of its composition are often extremely rigorous. That in each particular case they derive from a common set of rules and regulations, and that these themselves are a formulation of social relations and values, of social spaces and the relations between them. The newsstand is a form of commerce and a formally organised social construct, that while it may be an outlet for all kinds of kitsch, is not in itself kitsch. (And as is implied in Adorno, kitsch is more a matter of the quality of attention paid than a quality inherent in the object.) In some ways it is more like a Mahler symphony than Adorno would be able to admit. It contains many of the elements of modern urban culture, but its meaning as a social philosophy cannot be derived from either its contents or from its formal organisation alone. Like the modern artwork, it exhausts its own organisational potential through the systematic ordering and reordering of its means of display and access, but to trace the sources of this potential, philology is indispensable. There is no need to say that the modern artwork and the newsstand are the same, either. Only it seems necessary to suggest that if Adorno's characterisation of the modern artwork is reinvested with the

specific processes and instances of the formation and representation of social structure, it becomes the partner of Benjamin's philology rather than its enemy. Calling things by their name, one by one, part by part, liberates them from their strictly legal constitution, and opens them up to the multiplicity of naming positions that is the meaning of *polysemie*. Demonstrating the formal composition that follows from specific positions opens up the relations/homologies/representations in naming systems that produce them as social philosophy. It was in escaping from the radical philosophies of the '30s, such as Surrealism, that Henri Lefebvre, in 1945 to 1947, found this common space in his *Introduction to the Critique of Everyday Life*. But that's another sequel.

Total Ellipsis: Zola, Benjamin and the Dialectics of Kitsch¹

Let us begin with the final paragraphs of *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) and *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883), two love stories by Emile Zola that take place in the environment of shopping.² The reason for starting out from these texts is not to engage in a specialised exegesis of Zola, perhaps building on the work of Jeanne Gaillard, Rachel Bowlby or James Miller. Rather it is to make place for a speculative discussion on why their unusually intense conflation of sex with shopping, of human identity and commodity, should, to all appearances, have been of little interest for Walter Benjamin.

The novels both come to their climactic endings with cries and embraces. In *Thérèse Raquin* the guilty couple have drunk their poison:

And suddenly Thérèse and Laurent broke into sobs. Broken by a final crisis, they flung themselves into each other's arms, weak like children ... It was a flash of lightning. Stricken down they fell upon one another, at last finding consolation in their death. The young woman's mouth sought out the scar on her husband's neck that had been left by Camille's teeth.³

And in *Au Bonheur*, as the great reopening day of record sales draws to a close, the couple finally admit their mutual love:

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- 1 This essay began as a lecture in the inaugural series of the Design Museum, London, some years ago, under the general rubric of *Commerce and Culture*. My thanks to Helen Rees, the then Director of the Museum, for inviting me to do it, and since to Frank Mort whose own work and discussions of mine have been crucial and sustaining.
- 2 In Jeanne Gaillard's major work of urban demography, Gaillard 1977, p. 547 for a study of the department stores in the light of Zola's notes. Also her preface to Zola 1980. See Miller 1981; Bowlby 1985. For *Thérèse Raquin*, all quotations here are my own translation from Zola 1971, but for an English translation see that of Andrew Rothwell (Zola 1992a). *Au Bonheur* ... is republished in the English translation of 1883 as *The Ladies' Paradise*, Zola 1992b. The most comprehensive edition of Zola's notes is Zola 1986. All translations my own.
- 3 Zola 1971, p. 317.

A last murmur was rising from The Ladies' Paradise, the distant acclamation of a crowd. Madame Hédouin's portrait was still smiling, with its painted lips. Mouret had fallen on his desk, on the million that he could no longer see. He did not quit Denise, but clasped her in a desperate embrace.⁴

Across this gulf between degradation and triumph, the two books share the narrative tension and suspense of the popular, money-spinning novels or serials of their time. Of course Zola achieves this through his well-known 'sociology' of commerce in Second Empire Paris, which, in its circumstantial detail, goes far beyond the work of his literary contemporaries who exploited the same kinds of material.⁵ Yet as with more popular literature, the metaphors of moral despair and economic bankruptcy which Zola was able to figure in his exposition of the decadence and ruin of the small, family shop, or their opposite in the rise of the department store, acquire such autonomy that it is they that drive the narrative, rather than the profound unfolding of History's inevitability, of deep structural forces, or whatever. Maybe this above all repelled Walter Benjamin. It is difficult to imagine him admiring the novelist's manipulations, so utterly unmodern in any Brechtian sense. For, while in the *Passagen-Werk*, the exposés, dossiers and drafts alike, Benjamin does flirt briefly with *Thérèse Raquin*, *Au Bonheur des Dames* is absent.⁶

Enigmatically, Benjamin reads *Thérèse* as marking the novelist's departure from Fourier, who '... introduced the idyllic coloration of Biedemeier into the severe world of forms of the Empire style ...' In the *Exposé* of 1935 he wrote:

The brilliance of this [idyll], while fading, lasted until Zola. In his book entitled *Travail* [1901] Zola took up [Fourier's] ideas just as he takes leave of the arcades in *Thérèse Raquin*.⁷

4 Zola 1980, p. 383.

5 The sociology of the *Carnets* has been astutely put in question as an ethnocentric rather than an ethnographic position by Alain Cottureau in his introduction to Denis Poulot's *Le Sublime* of 1871, translated by John Moore as *Denis Poulot's Le Sublime – a preliminary study*, in Rifkin and Thomas 1988. For a popular novel that works precisely the same streets, constructing their decay as the decor and the condition of crime, see Gaboriau 1876. According to Régis Messac in his all important *Le 'Detective Novel' et l'influence de la pensée scientifique* (Messac 1929), this was probably written by 1867; see footnote 2 on p. 503. The story connects a murder in Batignolles to a decaying, small shop in the Rue Vivienne which is represented as the moral climate of the crime.

6 All references to and translations from the *Passagen-Werk* are taken from Benjamin 1989.

7 Benjamin 1989, p. 37.

A note in the Fourier *Konvolut*, w 5, 1, clears up the chronology of Zola's political return to Fourier, while in the 'First Projects', *Parisian Arcades II*, Benjamin was marginally more specific on architecture. Acutely pointing to the element of *colportage* in the novel, '... the altogether cinematic atrocity of the action', he insists that if *Thérèse* '... describes something scientifically, it is the death of the Parisian arcades, the process of the decomposition of an architecture'.⁸ No doubt, as with so many puzzles in Benjamin, there is an incompletely realised connection between Fourier's utopian architectures, Zola and shopping, which might be metonymically structured across the whole of his great project. But if it does seem strained, then this is not least because the Left Bank, Passage du Pont-Neuf of 1823, where *Thérèse*'s miserable little *mercerie* was located, is so far from being an arcade in the classic configuration that lies at the heart of Benjamin's preoccupations. Demolished in 1912, it would not have come under pressure from any department store until the gradual rise of La Samaritaine across the river later on in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. (This was, as it happens, a transformation of the right bank *quais* viewed with some anxiety by the Commission du Vieux Paris.) The classic arcades, built with various modifications between the 1790s and the 1860s, a very vague approximation to Benjamin's chronology, were specifically Right Bank. More importantly, they were situated around the *Bourse* and it was stock exchange money that their goods appealed.⁹ It is difficult, then, to see how Zola's depiction of a marginal and untypical arcade is a leave taking of this form of urban architecture, either as building or as idea. The more so as in *Au Bonheur ...*, the missing term between *Thérèse* and *Travail*, at the very moment of the great shop's apotheosis, Zola depicts it as '... the *phalansterium* whose wings, incessantly multiplied, were swallowing up the whole neighbourhood ...',¹⁰ suggesting that Fourier all the while on his mind. Moreover it is in this neighbourhood where Zola, with a perverse cunning, sites his department store, and which even today bears no signs of the imaginary ravaging he inflicted at its heart, that there stood and still stand the Passages des Panoramas, de Choiseul, Vivienne and Colbert.

Moreover, there was to be no general leave taking of Zola's vocabulary, which anyway becomes a conventional means of representing Benjamin's arcades in their eventual decay. Such language as this – '... au-delà derrière les étalages des boutiques pleines de ténèbres sont autant de trous lugubres dans lesquels s'agitent des formes bizarres ...' [beyond, behind the displays of shops full of

8 Benjamin 1989, p. 871.

9 See Green 1990, for a useful discussion of the economic and cultural role of the quartier of the Passages.

10 Zola 1971, p. 347.

dark shadows are as many gloomy pits in which bizarre shapes shift around] will be largely remembered and reiterated in the descriptive apparatuses of Parisian life over the succeeding six or seven decades. Not least in Louis Aragon's *Paysan de Paris* (1927), the text that provided an impulse to Benjamin's project and from which he will quote some Zolaesque turns and metaphors.¹¹ He noted, for example, Aragon's fascination with the 'lueur glauque' (greenish glimmer) of the arcades.¹²

So Benjamin's silence on *Au Bonheur des Dames* remains a puzzle, if for no other reason than that *Au Bonheur ...* is so obviously the novel of modern consumerism. It is the fictional accompaniment to descriptions of the triumphantly commercial *Expositions Universelles* of the early Third Republic, such as those of Edmondo de Amicis or George Augustus Sala in 1878.¹³ Zola does indeed seem to be part of the connective tissues of past and present, of trace and presence, his work a future dreaming for Benjamin's own historiography. The passage between Benjamin's all-important extract from Balzac writing in *Le Diable à Paris*, '... Le grand poème de l'étalage chante ses strophes de couleurs depuis la Madeleine jusqu'à la porte Saint-Denis ...' [The great poem of display sings its strophes of colours from the Madeleine to the Porte Saint-Denis] and the massive, interior 'gesamtkunstwerk' of Mouret's displays in the 'Bonheur' must be traced for the two to make sense out of each other.¹⁴ It belongs to the complex shifts between changing definitions and markings of interior and exterior space that so concern Benjamin, in the midst of which the department store becomes 'the last haunt' of the *flâneur*.^{15,16} Benjamin gives grounds for our suspicion in his selections from Siegfried Giedion's *Bauen in Frankreich*. So, for instance, in A 3, 5 & 6 we find: '... the principal of the grand magasin: "the floors form a unique space. You can, so as to speak, take them in with a *single* glance" ...', and '... the principle "welcoming the crowd, of keeping it by seduction ..."'¹⁷ These are both descriptions of the store that

11 Aragon 1926. For a convincing argument on Benjamin's relation to this text, see Leenhardt 1986.

12 Benjamin 1989, p. 856 (O⁰ 33).

13 Sala 1868 and Edmondo de Amicis in his essay 'A Glance at the Exposition' in De Amicis 1879. This latter is an astonishingly Zolaesque account of the exposition in its controlled yet hysterical account of a display in which for the first time the objects were priced; see: pp. 70–1.

14 Benjamin 1989, p. 66 (A 1, 4).

15 See Buck-Morss 1989, p. 36.

16 Buck-Morss 1989, p. 306.

17 Benjamin 1989, p. 71.

seem unlikely to have been made without a reading of the seductive Zola, and which certainly come from a tradition of architectural description rooted in nineteenth-century teleologies and taxonomies which were a part of Zola's intellectual environment.

One should imagine a history of Benjamin's work in which a *Konvolut* labelled Zola gets lost on the Spanish border. This *Konvolut* must have resembled Zola's own *Carnets d'enquêtes*. But it would list and annotate a knowledge of the writer and his world through a montage-poetic of collectorly observation in which Zola, like Baudelaire, would turn out to be nothing more than a figment of his own and his epoch's imagination. This at least would qualify him to become a dialectical image. As a further point of reference then, take Benjamin describing a print made at the very moment when Zola prepared his materials for *Au Bonheur*:

The first *grands magasins* seem to take their inspiration from oriental bazaars. In any case, in prints of about 1880, fashion would have it that one would cover the balustrades of the floors that overlooked the glass-covered, interior courtyard with carpets. For example in the grand magasin of 'La Ville de Saint-Denis'.¹⁸

The word 'seem' and the phrase 'in any case' suggest the poetic drive thoroughly unlike Zola's rather summary precisions in his records.

In the notebooks for *Au Bonheur des Dames*,¹⁹ Zola collects not only the statistical and topographical information that will provide the imagery for his novel, but he finds certain gestures, minutiae of everyday life, that configure in themselves a meaning for the whole process of economic organisation and social exchange. The male server's hands, for example, at the point when they approach those of a wealthy woman to help her try on a pair of gloves, the point when the sale nearly, but probably never, resolves itself into a moment of affective charge ... 'Only in the glove section, there may be something sensual about the fitting, the more so that the client is a young woman ...'²⁰ Such a point, complex in its formation and condensation, overdetermined, bears a resemblance to the dialectical images of Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk*, but as a fleeting moment of arrest in the process of exchange rather than as a completed figure. For a mere instant, in the *carnets*, you see the young man, the mere

18 [Cabinet des Estampes]: Ibid., A 7, 5.

19 Zola 1986, cap. 4.

20 Zola 1986, p. 216.

cogwheel, and the young woman, the all-powerful client, separated by class, joined and put apart by the commodity in the mundane act of trying-on. And the snapshot is suspended in or out of Zola's own learning of so many overwhelming lists, names of fabrics, methods and levels of remuneration etc. Briefly he allows himself to name something rather than to learn names, all the while deceiving himself with the already prevalent myth of his omniscience and his objectivity.

So, even if Zola nowhere emerges as a significant source for Benjamin's nineteenth century this is hardly sufficient reason for Denise or Mouret or shopping frenzy to have no status in a nineteenth century that includes the ragpicker, prostitute and the gambler. Denise generates as many profound stereotypes as does the prostitute for the future of the twentieth century. The *midinette*, the woman who knows her mind or price, the socially mobile provincial are all points for the powerful investment of spiritual energy in the mapping of capitalist social relations in fiction, film or sociology. Even though none of these feminines be producer and product in one, like the paradigmatic poet Baudelaire and his *semblable*, the whore. And if Adorno saw Benjamin's vice as naming, then Zola's vice, in apposition and complement to Benjamin's, is his listing. A listing which, at moments in *Au Bonheur ...*, in those fantastic, moving constructions that are Mouret's *étalages*, arrives at the effect montage, producing newly dreamed modes of affect out of the endless juxtaposition of industrial and manufactured products.

There are some obvious solutions to the problem. For one, Benjamin wanted Baudelaire at all costs to be *the* figure of his nineteenth century. In itself this entails a principle of exclusion and elides visions that were not a part of Baudelaire's. For another, he was perhaps prey to the traditional, Marxian aversion to Zola in favour of 'old Balzac' – this is the implication of my suggestion that he may have found Zola without historical structure (*supra* 2).²¹ But this does not add up in terms of his use of the earlier author, particularly as he had the chance to set him against Zola when he copies out a passage from a study on the role of publicity in Balzac's novels.²² Not only is publicity a crucial theme in *Au Bonheur ...*, but the big shop's lateral site, the Rue de la Michodière, is already an eminently Balzacian shopping street and crops up in Benjamin's transcription. The relation between the entry of commodity culture into the making of Balzac's and Zola's work seems, then, to be of topographic value in tracking the

21 The locus classicus of this discussion is, of course, Georg Lukács's essay 'Narrate or Describe' in Lukács 1971.

22 In Benjamin 1989, A 9, 2.

future of the twentieth century. The more so if we follow Susan Buck-Morss, as Benjamin's complex moves to connect fascism and publicity suggest the potential richness of the rapprochement. Thus, for Buck-Morss, Benjamin's question: 'Should it be empathy (*Einführung*) in exchange value which first makes people capable of the total *Erlebnis* [of fascism]? may be imbricated with the notion that fascist Italy is run like "a large newspaper"'.²³

Or again, Benjamin sets his nineteenth century a few decades earlier than Zola's, and the future is already dreamed without either his aid or his inclusion in it. Zola will not be to Balzac what the grands magasins were to the arcades – even though Zola's cunning transposition of his 1870s & 80s notes back into the 1860s is one of the sources of our construction of the nature of their antagonism. As it must also be a basis for Benjamin's mistaken belief about *Thérèse* ...

Can such a belief be mistaken, when the confrontation of Parisian shopping is as tropic as it is sociological, as staged as it is eventful? It is all too easy to trace a history of sentimental losses and new arrivals across the topographies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century shopping from César Birroteau to the Forum des Halles in which a chain of destructive moments and of their appropriate lamentations and celebrations may seem nothing more than a surface marker of some perhaps more profound, yet gradual transformation of the human economic subject. Are they not a series of metonymic dramas, or allegories, for each possible starting point of the sense of loss in an individual or collective memory? These texts of Eugène Dabit and J. Valmy-Baisse, for example, almost contemporary with each other (1930–2), mourn one populist vision of a departing Paris and celebrate the marvellous, epiphanic interconnectedness of another:

Dabit: Like so many things, good or bad they come from the USA ... you see these shops in rich and poor quarters alike, such as those food counters 'against the cost of living' Faubourg du temple or Avenue d'Orleans, there where one used to see the Soldat-Laboureur, now it's Uni-Prix or Mono-Prix or 5–10, and I don't know what else – ah these are not the bazaars of my childhood, nor the Lafayettes and Printemps of prosperous times, but a bit of both ...²⁴

Valmy-Baisse: within the limits of Paris there is a land which, although not mentioned in any atlas, has nevertheless its own well defined boundaries,

23 Buck-Morss 1989, p. 308.

24 Dabit 1990.

its aborigines with their own habits and customs, and its tourists – this is the country of the Paris Department Stores – intersected by the river, the crossing point of railways, and stations along its frontiers ...²⁵

In the first, the Soldat-Laboureur, which was once, in its prime, a killer shop of the early nineteenth century, has clearly, despite its relatively small size, survived the late nineteenth-century drama of the department stores. It coexists with them in the economic time of good and bad, which is one of people and social classes as much as places. Its challengers, the cut-price stores, 'the bit of both', are represented by Dabit as if American, despite their authentic Frenchness as an economic development. Here Americanism is projected as the sensational name for a resistance to any changing image of the menu-peuple. (As it happens the Soldat-Laboureur stores did just make it to the 1980s, when the last ones became branches of Franprix). In Valmy-Baisse the gradual accumulation of urban development, buildings, transport, underground and railways is congealed as an event discovered, a ready-made spectacle inside the Parisian self, a self-engrossment with a 'country' of pure consumption.

The conjunction of the two texts is useful. It not only restages Zola's juxtapositions, but suggests something of their complexities, of their intermediary phases and mismatches, of their duration and of their value as condensations for something else, for other positionings of loss or expectation in a world articulated through consumption. Benjamin, in his evasion of Zola, perhaps only ends up by underwriting the importance of retrieving him as a point of such condensation. Much of that process of representation, its cumbersome coming into being and into affectivity, and which remained piecemeal and partial up to and even after his own time, Benjamin took for a trace of the moment when capitalism could still dream its future utopia. Thus the decline of the arcade comes to stand for something overly contingent on his present, – the urgent delineation of the now fascist *flâneur*, at the cost of being edged out of its complex roles in the matrices of urban subjectivity. *This* dialectical image begins to look more like an ellipsis than a trace, radically overdetermined rather than revealing.

Even a deep sympathy with Benjamin's oversight need not commit us to his rather singular chronology. Nor should it prevent us from mapping the various temporalities of the commodity panic that culminate with Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard, or assessing their implications for our understanding of quite what was this nineteenth century, of which Paris was the reputed Capital.

25 Valmy-Baisse 1932.

This article will continue to speculate on the nature of Benjamin's omission or lapsus, if lapsus it is, and its implications for the description of everyday life. For instance, the two novels from which we set out repeatedly confound and transpose the status of things and people. In both endings the lovers' moment of transcendence is watched over by a simulacrum. In one case the paralysed, mute Mme Raquin, a figuration for the immobility of small capital, watches grimly but without active signification, her emotion locked within her. In the other, the portrait of Mme Hédouin looks on, rendered foolish and outdated by capital's onward and upward movement to produce new forms of human relationship. And in this density both novels manifest uneasy transitions between the allegorical and the symbolic modes of discourse. Does the pile of money, the million, for example, symbolise Denise and Mouret's fulfilment or do Denise and Mouret stand as figures for the plenitude of capital? It is hardly an unreasonable irresolution on Zola's part to fall between the framing of commodities as a concentrated representation of the ensemble of the modern everyday, and people as things whose relations can be envisaged as if relations between commodities. And it is his turning into narrative of irresolution that has as much a right of city in our consciousness as Benjamin's ruminations on the object-whore. Possibly, if it should be a criterion, Zola's dilemma is closer to the marxist reading of the commodity as fantasmagoria, but for him it is lived out, rather than theoretical critique, absorbed into the narrative of triumphant love. And if not Denise, then why not Mouret the gambler risking ruin, hurling his resources, human, moral and financial, at the caprice of bourgeois woman ...? Sometimes his gestures, in doing or undoing some gigantic *étalage*, are not unlike those of the gambler absorbed into his own system of nervous, physical action as he casts his bet.

Thérèse ... concludes with the final discharge of thwarted desire that requires the affirmation of death to appease its destructive force. In *Au Bonheur ...* desire, fenced in by social difference – the domination of employee by her boss –, and more difficult for its victims to admit, is discharged in a surge of abundant vitality. Of course this distinction is not so easily written. According to a certain reading of Freud on the death instinct, such as that made by Leo Bersani in *The Freudian Body: psychoanalysis and art*,²⁶ there is no fundamental difference between these affirmations; they belong to each other in identity rather than antinomy, the very substance of a dialectic.

In *Thérèse ...*, then, the drama is one of love that unfolds against an old, small capitalism, homely, comfortable and adequate, but dying a natural death. The

26 Bersani 1986.

passage du Pont-Neuf, whose description opens the novel with its repulsive paving stones and dusty shops, is, as I have already suggested, off the beaten track before any department store can come to challenge it. It's a shortcut, not a place to go. Mme. Raquin chooses the shop there for her and her daughter-in-law because its deathly quiet reminds her of her province, because like a province it is cheap. Already on the edge of dilapidation, the distractions of Thérèse and Laurent's doomed and murderous love bring it to the edge of ruin. Their inevitable neglect of business piles up the dust and yellows the fabrics whose deterioration represents their decline and accompanies them to their suicide. Laurent, a second-rate painter, cannot produce true art until after he has murdered Camille. Nourished by his guilt, it attains a serious aesthetic value. But this art, far from enacting redemption or transcendence of the everyday, is no more than another force for ill in the unfolding of the drama. The financial cost of his making it is a parasite on Mme. Raquin's inactive, small-rentier capital. And the moral cost is such that he must destroy the paintings which, in their very sincerity, are as sure a record of his guilt as Dorian Gray's hidden portrait. Profound art itself apes dead capital, or at least its death in withdrawal from circulation.

In *Au Bonheur ...*, Zola seems himself utterly in love with what he represents as the killer shopping of the Department store, made glorious by the death in proximity of Baudu, Robineau et. al. in the 'huis clos' of the Rue de la Michodière. Yet just as *Au Bonheur ...* is a celebration of the new social life that is present and to come, it is also the celebration of what Marx would call 'dead capital'. In their very making Mouret's huge profits will weigh back into the machinations for the intensified extraction of surplus value scrupulously charted throughout the entire book – the *rouages* of mass consumption so tersely recorded in the *carnets*: 'Too great a machine for goings on and sentimental stories. It all runs in steam power and the employees of both sexes are nothing but cogwheels. Trop grande machine pour les cancanes et les histoires sentimentales.'²⁷ The putrescence and death, in that order, of one form of commerce and the preponderance of dead capital over life in the other, are quite inseparable, something about which the climax of *Au Bonheur* is ecstatically misleading.

But such is Zola's passion, apparently, for the triumph of big capital, that he privileges its agitation, its repeated stimulations, over the repose of death. Social optimism and sexual desire meet up for a passionate moment on a money-laden desk. Denise's final declaration to her inconsolable boss, who

27 Zola 1986, p. 182.

believes her to love another, 'Oh M. Mouret, c'est vous que j'aime' [Oh M. Mouret, it's you who I love], invokes the redemption of modern capital from all its sins, sins against itself as against its slaves. Denise's unsullied, disinterested love will save her and Mouret each from their own fate and from the ways in which as capital and labour they ensure each other's. His tears are dried by the agreeing of her incredibly high price, which is the contractual exaction of his love for her. Pursued by him throughout 500 pages, one commodity amongst the many he controls, in yielding up only her labour power and not her person, Denise sets her person at a price beyond that of the mere commodity which she thus seems to transcend. Finally, she is neither worker nor commodity, neither proletarian nor prostitute. And, marrying socially below himself, Mouret is elevated beyond the vulgar if alluring success of money. The transcendence which is the reader's pleasure is built out of the absorption of the conflicts of the everyday into a redeeming figure of love.

Or, the story of *Au Bonheur* ... is exactly the inverse of Kozintzev's and Trauberg's film of the Paris Commune, *The New Babylon* (1929). Modelled on Zola's department store, the *New Babylon* of the title is a totalising microcosm of capitalist economy in which the cogwheels of consumer culture here grind to the definitive destruction of the working class. Certainly nothing of human value, no affective charge can connect across the gulf of exploiter and exploited as Zola had imagined that it would.

And even then it does seem that redemption in Zola will depend at least on an unholy combination of love and money, on their capacity to resolve each other, rather than on love alone or on the defeat of money. And especially so if we take it, according to my reading, that there is as much guilt, murder, as much death in *Au Bonheur* ... as in *Thérèse* ... In terms of Zola's collected materials, the narrative represents an ideology of triumphant pleasure in the spectacle, which both ignores what he knows about the department store and which effaces the abjectness of his observations. For does he not record that the women are all gone by the age of 35, most home to marry, but some to prostitution?

They are not quite working women. Ladies approximately, pretentious, posers. Ladies too through their contact with the clients. Yet they can hardly read even the little newspapers and rarely go to the theatre. Generally, if some are amiable and have a vague airs of chamber maids, the great majority are not flexible. Sour, disagreeable, badly spoken, pedantic in their silk robes, to such a point that many of the clients prefer to be served by the men.²⁸

28 Ibid., p. 212.

What Zola precisely does not collect in his investigations is his story, even if examples of servers marrying their bosses were quite current. That is to say, Denise comes not from his observations but from narrative convention. This all too obvious and banal a matter that is at the heart of a difference with Benjamin's famous principle '... method of this work – to show'. And Zola's narrative time, which is a time of the reproduction of capital, is not the temporality of redemption, the cataclysmic end of an era that is Messianic time. The *carnets* suggest as much ... 'So, rivalry, sullenness, hatred. In the shop one is concerned only with money; rare there are love or the idyll. No affection. The struggle for life'.²⁹ Or if it is a redemptive time, then it is the commodity, exchange value itself, that becomes the site of a utopian authenticity not in its transcendent presence as pure thing, but through the endless speed-up of its circulation that produces Denise's bliss in contrast to Thérèse's misery. In Benjamin's or Adorno's terms redemption is impossible. There is no end to time, no space called art, that space of ultimate resistance to and refusal of commodities. Zola's utopia needs neither apocalypse nor art. It allows nothing for them as a projection of human needs. Instead romantic narrative itself, the authentic literary commodity of the nineteenth century, becomes utopic. Utopic as a means of projecting desire into the relations between things and people whether they be disastrous or triumphant, in demonstrating the exemplary difference between Denise and Thérèse that is embodied in the relative vitality or entropy of the commodity. Yet this very vitality, this escape from entropy, may also be thought of as identical to the dark vision of Benjamin's and Adorno's dystopia of the commodity fetish that haunts the *Passagen-Werk* and *Minima Moralia*. We have to consider the possibility that their dystopia is indeed everyday life in the very sense that Henri Lefebvre will propose it, as a residuum of all the complex interactions of desire and need, of the 'neither authentic nor inauthentic ...'³⁰ It is as much as we have to go on.

'Oh, Monsieur Mouret, c'est vous que j'aime'. No one, I think, out shopping in a modern Parisian boutique would dream of saying 'je vous aime'. Contemporary commerce requires intimacy from the moment of entry to the shop, not furtively stolen in the purchase of a pair of gloves: a complicity that belies the formal usage of the 'vous', for the assistants in designer boutiques wear the clothes signed by the author-corporations that employ them and which one might buy. And, more often than not, big corporations look like little shops, or in-store boutiques in the great shells of old department stores. The art of

29 Ibid., p. 182.

30 See Lefebvre 1961, especially the *mise au point*, pp. 7–103; Adorno 1974.

étalage is reduced back to the tasteful creation of the illusion of a scarcity-in-mass-production that can only be fabricated in discrete and broken spaces. In the midst of this restrictive art, what about art, and is Mouret's art now art, a going beyond the very commodity whose seduction it was designed to practise, beyond the lowered horizons of mere taste?

All this would be without a reason if it were not for the need to rethink recent experience of shopping in the so-called most recent consumer revolution of the 1980s, its representation of the still-current triumph of liberal economics. The wearing of dead capital on one's sleeve shifts beyond the Debordian colonising of the commodity and back to a Zolaesque metonymy of people and things invested in the consumer, rather than the Benjaminesque seller that was the prostitute or the poet. In the new *Ventre de Paris*, the Forum des Halles of the gigantic mall, or the equally spectacular mall beneath the Louvre, eyes really are bigger than the fast-food stomach. Or, in an environment of totalising kitsch, is Benjamin still a reliable guide to a messianic deliverance of the commodity-suffering subject?

I'm not at all sure that there is any longer a need for a polemic around the correlation of the words like 'commerce', 'art' and 'culture'. It seems perfectly acceptable, self-evident, indeed, that we live in a society where the distinctions between them have not been so much overcome as rendered obsolete by our expansive understanding of the idea of 'culture'. It is hard to imagine that there would have been such a thing, for example, as the academic discipline of cultural studies, were it not for the eminently cultural character of modern commerce and commercialism, with which it is largely preoccupied, in the aporia of critique without what used, fondly, to be called action. Roland Barthes's still classic *Mythologies* signalled as much.³¹

Equally the long process of the de-ethnicising of anthropology, its turning back on metropolitan societies, has shown that commerce, in its various forms, is just one of world cultures, one amongst many. There are still cultures that bypass the circuits of capitalist commerce, either because they actually resist them, or because they are poor precisely because of them, and are themselves bypassed, or for other reasons. They may exist within metropolitan society or outside it, under names like 'third-world' or 'poverty'. But, be that as it may, in the context of our immediate society almost all of the possible definitions of culture are negotiated through commerce, which is itself a culture. Western society cannot be seen as privileged in having 'separate spheres'. Indeed, to pick up on that phrase, it has been largely through the feminist critique of the image

31 Barthes 1957.

and status woman in modern history that the utter inseparability of commerce and culture has been most powerfully demonstrated.

At the same time, they are not precisely the same thing: and so the possible permutations of the relationship between commerce and culture are so many and so diverse – the origins and fate of Watteau's *Enseigne de Gersaint* and the narrative of Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* are just two possible instances, – that's it's almost tempting to scrap the distinction altogether. What culture and what commerce, and at what point of the historical conjunctures of their changing definition should we take them? Does the series of relations we might establish add up to a compelling account of historical change, or will the discontinuities and specifics lead us into a spiralling relativism of meaning? There are some other convincing reasons as well – much like those that have tempted social or political theorists to do without another well known difference that the one between commerce and culture closely resembles, – that of base and superstructure in Marxist economics. So much time can be devoted to defining the two elements of the equation, what precisely is characteristic of each part that is purely 'sui generis' and not really a part of the other, that it becomes an end in itself. It is then all too easy to forget that the idea of this kind of distinction and relation is in itself necessitated by the need for a representation of the social and the economic: its objective is experimental and provisional. And, moreover, such representations that are highly dynamic and evolving in their senses. Their history will be a very different one written through taking a catalogue of essential definitions at face value. One of the great virtues of the early Baudrillard, of the *Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, was to signal this in respect of yet a third, similar couplet, that of use value and exchange value, and show how their relation articulates the symbolic values of our society.

Not, I believe, that the point had been entirely overlooked amongst the more Hegelian formulations of classical Marxism, of the kind that Marx engaged with when he argued that consumption emerges as a 'desire brought about by the object' and that: 'An *objet d'art* creates a public that has artistic taste and is able to enjoy beauty – and the same can be said of any other product. Production accordingly produces not only an object for the subject, but a subject for the object'.³²

32 Baudrillard 1981; see especially, p. 112, on sumptuary exchange. Marx and Engels 1976, p. 129. Clearly my whole argument is thought through across an immense range of important literature on the commodity. It is as important to note the crucial turning point in commodity theory that was Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (Lukács 1971), as it is not to forget Bourdieu's predecessor in the description of consumerism, Veblen 1899. Veblen's argument does not leave much new space for the kind of discussion undertaken

So if the distinction is one that, as soon as it is raised, seems destined to confute itself, why is making it of such importance? As, indeed, it really is. We have only to consider the importance of the issue of 'commodification' in cultural and critical theory, as well as in day-to-day intellectual chat, the fury that surrounds the definition of kitsch, whenever and wherever it is undertaken, to see as much. The key here, I think, is that commerce has two roles. One that it is seen as the antithesis of culture, in the general as-if Kantian sense, that culture is defined as being that which is outside interest, not in essence for sale, even if it can be bought or sold, paid for and so on. And, the inseparable corollary of this, that commerce itself is a culture, – the culture of capitalist production. In fact, Theodor Adorno comes systematically to identify culture with commerce, defining culture itself as the antithesis of art, as a sub-critical category of the commercialisation of human social relations. This is, nonetheless, what Henri Lefebvre can designate 'everyday life' through his particular assimilation of art to a social whole. Commerce realises the value and expands the limits of capitalist production, but does so successfully to the extent that it involves people in a different, and maybe conflicting manner to their involvement in production – one that, amongst other effects, smooths out certain aspects of social difference and attenuates the logics of economic and social crisis. Commerce or the commodity, can be seen at one and the same time both as culture and a negation of culture.

The crucial viewpoint, then, is that from which the presence of commercial relations in culture is perceived, and an attitude towards that presence. It is from here the measure of the difference – or of its lack – is taken, and that value is put upon it, on the way in which this presence is read as a register of wider social relations and human values. An interesting case is that of Pierre Bourdieu's analysis in his essay on 'High Culture and High Couture', in which he closely identifies the patterns of innovation, critical acclaim and circulation of the products of avant-garde art on the one hand, and the rag-trade on the other. They reinforce each other while claiming their own territory in a relation that is both mutually supportive and yet exclusive. Despite some fundamental differences in their modes of production, they similarly give rise to a social habitus, a site for the constitution and reproduction of social relations.

But the illusion of separation is now hardly worth sustaining. Over a decade later it is difficult to think that Bourdieu would now have to make his case so strongly. It is a couple of decades since Pierre Cardin moved into the ownership

by Bourdieu in Bourdieu 1993. For an example of informed and complex recent discussions see the essay Amariglio and Callari 1993.

of the means of cultural production, with his performance and exhibition space, the 'espace Cardin' in Paris, and in the succeeding years the initials **PC** have become one of the principal, international signifiers of cultural value at the most banal as well as the most luxurious levels of the sale of everyday objects. While in recent years – months, for that matter, a number of the younger fashion houses have offered their produce and their name as the object of specifically high-cultural reflection. This goes for the choreography of Jean-Paul Gaultier's catwalk and the music compact discs of *Comme de Garçons*. More detailed than these, even, are the cultural manoeuvres of the Agnès B. label in the Rue du Jour in Paris.

Agnès B., which is really quite a large international concern, appears as the animator of an entire spectrum of activity at the level of local social life. The Rue du Jour is graced with Agnès B. boutiques for men, women and Lolitas, and a gallery/bookshop, called the Librairie-Galerie du Jour. Archaeologically this latter is of interest because it occupies the white-tiled space of an old butchery on the ground floor of a seventeenth-century Hotel – the succession of uses is built into the perception of the place, and a play made of this disjuncture of histories that gives an air of false marginality: an underscoring of the transitory as a poetic of the purchase.

The atmosphere is a little like that in the films of one of the most noted of a new generation of art-cinéastes, Leos Carax. In his *Mauvais Sang* (1986), for instance, it is in the dilapidated shells of old butcher-shops that the most impenetrable, neo-argotique and post-politically correct of human relationships unfold. The spaces vacated by the evolution of capital themselves connote the disjunction of the avant garde, while what fills them is in effect an economically or socially or artistically conventional type of thriller narrativity. In Carax's most recent film, *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* (1991), the set reconstructs the bridge as if a ruin, at the foot of a blind and excluding Samaritaine department store. The relations of the marginal protagonists are worked through on an axis between their exclusion from the maw of commerce on the one hand, and their magical, nocturnal penetration of the Louvre on the other, in a readymade dynamic of inauthentic commodity versus authentic art. The death of commodities or their spaces is realised as the space of marginality within the confines of a gentrified urban culture.

But, in the Rue du Jour, Agnès B. had already gone a step beyond this atavistic bohemianism, this desire to imagine an avant garde as if necessarily poor. There you can proceed from the purchase of clothes to that of a carefully selected cross-section of currently fashionable literature in the book-store-cum-gallery across the road from the clothes shop. In its selection the Galerie plays Pivot to its customers. This is rather different from the multiple services of the depart-

ment store because the relation between its parts is held together by a single image, that of a garment produced by Agnès B. It is everywhere in its passage through different levels of commerce and culture that make up the social rounds of the street. In the shops it is there to be bought for about 500 ff., and it's a really quite nice tracksuit cotton, close-cut, pearl-press-stud cardigan. On the walls of the shops there are photographs of it being worn, that, when you do cross the road, turn out to represent the cardigan as an object of cultural reflection. These photographs are not just fashion shots. They are not even fashion shots of the kind that advertise their label through being artwork rather than descriptions, like the images of Bruce Weber, or the typical spread of Calvin Klein. Rather they propose the cardigan as the means of the exploration of the diverse genres of figure photography. In the shape of posters, postcards and artbooks, the cardigan becomes an object of cultural knowledge. It participates in the sale of a certain kind of literature, roughly speaking drawn from the recent arcana of a generalised, commercial yet educated gay culture. That is to say from the novels of Pessoa to some more standard icons – Warholiana, Edmund White or Genet. In this ambience the purchase of the cardigan, whether of its flesh or its simulacra, acquires the aura of an epiphanic consumption, the purchase-equivalent of the all-in-artwork. And the piquancy of the experience is darkly underlined in experiencing it only a few metres above the gigantic, underground mall of Les Halles, where, no doubt, it can also be made – if under somewhat harder conditions. The affective differences of shopping are still invested within even the narrow space of this single garment. And to argue that these differences are only now simulacra would be to whistle in the wind.

Properly speaking the cardigan, this collapse of art into culture, is what Adorno would call kitsch. As such it suggests another approach to the eternal conflict between Adorno and Benjamin over the description and theory of the object and permits us to imagine a point at which their preoccupations might collide. This would be where dialectic runs through kitsch itself, not as a sign of its – the dialectic's – entropic decay, but as a term in its argument with the naming of the real as itself embodying a risk. The risk that Agnès B.'s little knit might just as well be an ethical shirt of Nessus as the congealing into form of a dialectical image. The risk, that is to say, of Zola's and Benjamin's 'différend' as I have attempted to construct it. If shopping thus becomes redemptive through its figuring of the ethical within the constraints of kitsch, kitsch thus becomes a means of figuring the everyday as ambivalently transcendent within its own terms. So to take the risk could lead us to ponder Judith Krantz's *Scruples* as profoundly as Benjamin's passages from Giedion, or to talk to some common shoppers rather than safely seek our commercial origins canonically in César Birotteau's carminative creams.

The difference between Benjamin and Zola is finally at the heart of a difficulty in assimilating consumerism to a modernity invested in avant-garde or resistant art. The problem with Denise is that she is the vehicle for a fantasy of transcendence, of a total and passionate escape from the commodification of the human being, of an escape enabled by and worked through the whole phantasmagoria of the department store itself. 'Oh, Monsieur Mouret, c'est vous que j'aime' is a cry of ecstasy that supposes the commodity either can be overcome or used to achieve authentic feeling in a way that drops the curtain on the great narratives of modernity as tragic. Perhaps, as I have suggested, Zola made redemption far too easy and also too costly for the modernity with which we and Benjamin have consoled our sense of fatality. Yet if Zola is stupid in his muddled desires, his belief in accuracy and romance, this stupidity is a scar left by a world of things that does indeed mark or make the relations between human beings. His obtuseness was not to realise that the narrative is different from the things, just as Benjamin's was to hide the narrative in case it overwhelmed the things. Exquisitely, they elide each other.

The Long Run of Modernity, or an Essay in Post-Dating

I

As the symposium unfolded I began to have a feeling that, whatever our declared objective, the postmodern was not going to be all that crucial in our discussions.¹ Indeed, it seemed to be something of a strain to keep ‘postmodernity’ right there in front of us, as a primary object of attention, and, despite its offer of a generous plurality of discourse, the other aspect of the title, the ‘re-reading of modernity’, turned out to be rather more substantial. Maybe this suggests that whether or not the modern, or modernity, were, or are, a finished or an unfinished *project*, then at least the (re-)reading of them is far from finished, especially *as a project*.

One argument I had wanted to propose by way of a gloss on my contribution was that ‘postmodern’ could be read as a largely academic hysteria, a displacement into the only possible common field of the total disintegration of all sign-systems, of the separate anguishes generated by the frustrated interdiscipline of those fragmented academic disciplines that take up each other’s methods only to further their own, over-specialised disciplinary ends. According to this, the postmodern both doubles the possibilities of specialisation and names a resistance to the growing division of labour in the modern university, a last demand for the recognition of the once and truly artisanal character of mental labour. Alas, this resistance is fated to self-defeat. A defeat registered in the very richness of the literature on the postmodern, its monstrous, industrial richness, its uncountable key documents and highpoints, in the diversity of their subject-matters, diagnoses, ethics and politics.² These serve only to reaffirm the essential character of this post-modern object of knowledge – through its protean refusal to these fragmented disciplines of any satisfaction for the desire to

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1 ‘Postmodernism and the Re-Reading of Modernity’, held at the University of Essex, 1989.

2 This is underlined in the conceptual and intellectual distance that separates Jencks 1978 from Jameson 1984 and Lyotard 1986.

surpass their limits that had called it into being. Engaging battle against or for the end of all totalities is identically aporetic. Is this not a small price to pay for the most striking interdiscipline of the last decade? And who, but a professor, or a child, could really think to get lost in the Hotel Bonaventura?

II

My individual concerns, which I assume to be fairly typical of a social group, come out of many years of work – teaching, doing research, writing, politicking, with a loosely assumed but fairly secure paradigm of modernity. One that, impossibly and ideally, linked Baudelaire to Lenin, negotiating but excluding the reactionary high modernism of Lewis or an Eliot. And, within this, there was an experience of intense pleasure or fascination in the modern, its seductive offer of so many materials for consumption. Such experience, it now appears, must have been pretty confused, as one mistakenly enjoyed things as modern that were really ‘post-’, like shopping or New Music. For example, in the late 1960s I thought that Cage, Cardew or Nam June Paik, even the Living Theatre (romantic-revival) and Isaac Asimov (the galactic crowd), were modern(ist) rather than simply contemporary, and enjoyed them as such, living out some of their values, consuming them as avant-garde and progressive in relation not only to traditional music but also to traditional modernist (serial) music. Given the suppleness of the paradigm, all of this was flexibly worked around the political tensions inherent in the definition of this last term, *progressive*, which fluctuated according to wider political developments and allegiances. Or, rather, the polarities of modern(ism) plotted around Brecht-Lukács, or Constructivism-Realism, were themselves sufficiently well established and thought through to provide a complex articulation or conjugation of different aspects of the political and cultural. Albeit there were plenty of mechanistic or idealist arguments and plenty of attempts to escape them, some of which, on either side, could now be seen as having modern and postmodern aspects.

Thus, too, the older round of contradictions such as those between the aesthetic and social combinations made in Dadaism, and the linguistic dismantlings and resynthesising of cubism, Duchamp or various futurisms, made a lot of sense to us, and it was possible to empathise with them and learn from them, secure in the knowledge that they had much to do with the evolution of capital and its uneven development, and the different possible contradictory and productive orders of the general relation art/society or art/capital or art/politics. One was conscious that an end of the sixties neo-Dada movements like Fluxus or Art-Language risked being a ‘second time as farce’, or being even more

quickly recuperated by the market than the first wave, but inside the art school they functioned as a significant relation of difference, positing modernity as relation and therefore as an unfinishable project. Peter Osborne pointed this out in the title of his paper 'Modernity is a Qualitative, Not a Chronological Category'.³ Necessarily, then, the first stirrings of the postmodern looked like the birth of a new conservatism.

In addition, it is useful to recall how the intellectual movements of the early twentieth century were mapped into the present via a number of cultural developments and disciplinary studies. An instance is the kind of film studies evolved by Christian Metz – the learning of Saussure through a contemporary cinema which at that time had an immense and quite particular prestige and whose popularity impressed itself on the theoretical project of its analysis.⁴ This in turn favoured the kind of investigations that, in art history, for example, could lead back to a more subtle assessment of the intellectual transmutation of signs in Duchamp than the one allowed within the outlines of a simpler modernist teleology – an interpretation through which the linguistic meditations of the *Notes on the large glass* could then be reworked in the teaching programmes of another kind of social modernity, that of a relatively wider access to higher education.⁵ The massive extension of art education that unfolded in Britain c. 1966–75 was especially significant in giving a new impetus to all kinds of modern(ist) cultural practices, instilling them with a fresh validity and a sense of urgency that is hard to recall now, when the semiotic 'project' has become so much a syllabus routine. Another marker of the rise of the post-modern could be the strange congruence of the beginning of the end of the expansiveness of the early 1970s with the beginning of the wholesale establishment of modern(ist) discourses in more and more types of degree programmes in universities and colleges.

Despite the rapidity with which 'radical' theory was institutionalised into syllabuses and thesis topics, then, or perhaps in part because of it, the very formation of our modern(ist) intelligentsia presupposes a susceptibility to the new. The trajectories of high modernity are polymorphous in their passages through intellectual groups and educational institutions, whose impetuses,

3 Osborne 1992.

4 Metz 1982.

5 Duchamp, then as now, was an especially compelling figure because he stretched the meaning, ethics and conceptual structures of modernity so far in so many directions. For a semiotic approach to Duchamp of that time, see Burnham 1971, and for today see Nesbit 1986. For a sense of the semiotic environment of two decades ago, see also Schefer 1967 and early work of Stephen Bann, such as his introduction to the *Systems* exhibition catalogue (London, 1971).

modes of intellectual activity and forms of competition come to shape the bases for the theorising of the 'post'. I wish to underline these things not because they are remarkable but because they are not.

And then, more than any other question in modern social relations, that of gender became once again crucial for all the elements of cultural politics and theory. Marxism had, after all, been around quite a time, and was already comfortably built into the mainstream of debates around modern cultural forms. Gender theory (feminism) certainly forced a rethinking of the whole nature of modernity, that has not yet been fully argued through, nor fully taken on as having the philosophical and methodological significance that is proper to it. There could be two polar readings of the gender question, either (1) it becomes a neo-conservative postmodernism, ensnaring the project of modernity in the alluring wiles of infinitely plural identities, or (2) it is the form of modernity that has succeeded all other modernisms in the unfolding history of returning-repressed that is the essence of Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), and of the categorial critique of de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. If postmodernism does have an attribute, it may be that it allows us to make any choice we wish between these positions, or to believe that 'woman' was, all along, the postmodern.⁶

The daily chat of two decades ago has, in some ways, become today's pluralistic theorising, and there seem to be reasons for this, of which I have suggested one or two. Some of this chat, even – which, as it happens, includes Derrida's famous critique of Saussure in his chat with Kristeva in 1968⁷ – has been turned into quasi-totalising theory of the impossibility of either presence or totalities.⁸ Yet seen in the distorting mirror of that time, *Tel Quel* itself seemed terribly modern(ist), and Deleuze on Proust was a far cry from George Painter.⁹ One problem in re-reading the modern now is that of situating one's own history within the highly professionalised theoretical paradigms of the postmodern, whether in the work of its avatars, Baudrillard or Lyotard, or its critics, Jameson or Habermas. Good Marxists despite ourselves, we ourselves become the last actors in our history whose word we are prepared to take.

6 For and art/cultural historians, the starting point is De Beauvoir 1962. See also Nochlin 1988; Duncan 1982, Kristeva 1984, Pollock 1979, and more recently, Pollock 1990.

7 Derrida 1981.

8 Republished in *Positions*, but originally edited in Kristeva, Rey-Debove and Umikey-Sebeok 1971, pp. 11 ff.

9 Deleuze 1970.

III

A truly embarrassing risk of trying to write about the postmodern is that of seeming to be either very tetchy or very prudish, especially on the ground of an outdated progressivism. What could be more dreadful a feeling than that of an old-style Marxist, genteely insisting that nothing has changed in the world of late? At least nothing of a fundamental character, such as a total transformation in the nature of the commodity, symptomatic of the arrival of an entirely new stage of the world economy. On the whole I am inclined to accept the view of those experts who do argue that this has not (as yet) come about,¹⁰ and to believe a text such as Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1971), which can be understood as an origin of postmodern theory, shares some strange anachronisms with Lenin's highly modernist *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916, 1950).¹¹ For if the latter overpredicted the structure of modern economic relations, Debord certainly overdramatised the totalising force of their representations, both precipitating a series of ongoing debates of the type 'where are we up to?'

In the end, a fetish of postmodernism like the ATT building in New York does look much more like a traditional bit of commercial styling than anything else, let alone a major intervention in the field of social theory. Even so, in the discussions around it, the juxtaposition ATT/postmodern might incline people to forget that other, more vulgar, 1973 resonance of ATT/Chile. Inside the building is an interactive museum of communication that calls you by your first name, should you so wish, and though this meets some of the criteria for an immaterial culture, it also reeks of the fairground, which is a distinctly *mechanical* modern phenomenon. As a museum, it is about as postmodern as a 1960s high-rise council estate is modernist.

IV

It is only to be expected that the heir to the throne of Britain should confuse the excreta of the capitalist building industry with modernity. Our problem is something other: one of establishing much more knowledge about change and rates of change across a more deeply interconnected network of objects

10 See, for example, Callinicos 1990, or Lefebvre 1958. Lefebvre makes an especially detailed case for a complex notion of totality, see Lefebvre 1961, pp. 183 ff.

11 Debord 1994; Lenin 1962.

of study. This is an enterprise that has been common to different schools and forms of scholarship. We might note that it was as fundamental to the early Warburg school of art-historical writing as to the French *Annales* historians in the inter-war years. And that the classic theorists of modern architecture, like Siegfried Giedion or Nikolaus Pevsner, who, in their endless catalogue-like monographs of daily objects and technologies, or architectural guidebooks, attempted to fulfil the drive to omniscience of nineteenth-century capital as it was manifested through the Universal Exhibitions.¹² To sustain such an unmanageable project, they tried to bind their materials to a simple teleology of progress or to a canon of modern objects, which themselves were phenomena of industrial modernity and its social philosophies.

Establishing the forms and meanings of everydayness was also a project of contemporary cultural studies until it got caught up in the very post-modern feedback of identity politics into subculture, even though this last notion was itself an important conceptual corrective to another embarrassment of modern(ism). That is, the embarrassment that comes from trying to deal with a certain scale of things that ought to look improbable – centuries of artistic innovation and avant gardes on the one hand, and the global economy on the other – and then arguing too forcibly about the relation between such generalised and disparate materials on the ground of a narrowly canonical series of objects and events. Thus certain commonly accepted signifiers of the modern, such as the painter ‘Manet’, or the poet ‘Baudelaire’ or theorist ‘Benjamin’ get quite literally overcrowded. They become the narrowly-boundaried proving-ground for versions of events or processes of which they themselves are but one, differential sign.

Meanwhile, many of the forms and details of the modern still await their discovery, let alone their classification, and need to be freed from the corset of the canon, which, following Henri Lefebvre in his *Introduction à la modernité*, we might designate as ‘modernism’.¹³ It is precisely here that post-modern plurality could open up a critique not so much of the modern(ist) grand narrative as of its narrative schemas and their minutiae. In effect this would not in itself offer anything new or justify a ‘post-’, and the tendency of postmodernism as a narrative has been more like an ecological disaster than a new dawn of intellectual liberty.

12 Bloch 1965; Warburg 1939. For a discussion, see Ginzburg 1989, pp. 39–96. And Ginzburg 1980. See also Giedion 1969 and Pevsner 1960.

13 Lefebvre 1962, p. 10 ff.

It was this mapping project, immense yet modest, that linked Benjamin of the *Passagen-Werk* to Lefebvre of the *Critique de la vie quotidienne*.¹⁴ Lefebvre's virulent criticism of what he calls the 'attack on the everyday' in Baudelaire and Surrealism, their desire always to stand on the far side of everydayness, has a reductive vigour, unless we can accept the urgency of his project of displacement and discovery. If we can measure his success in terms of his ability to read modernity's canons only at its margins, then in a similar respect, we can measure Benjamin's failure in his ultimate inability to force them from the centre of his astonishing discoveries.

V

Anyway, just in case, in the midst of the debates that rage around the question of what, if anything, the terms 'modern' and 'postmodern' mean, whether they are opposites, or whether they are different names for the same thing, for the same kind of thing, or a form of logical development within a single, relatively uniform process – or whatever – just in case we were to worry about the originality of our predicament, let us note this: as early as the 1820s, which was *not* a 'fin de siècle', a Parisian art critic, writing of 'romantisme', then a much newer concept in France than in Germany, was able to say that '... it is like one of those Russian paper bills, of which no one knows the precise value, but that nonetheless serves as a unit of exchange'.¹⁵ Even though this perceptive comment was not extended to the general cultural discourse of his time, nor intended to throw all its values into question, Béraud was certainly right to draw attention to the fact that almost anything that was not *clearly academic* classicism could go under this signboard, from eclectic historicism to hyper-pure classical atavism – both of which extremes might be practised by an individual artist.

At the same time, Béraud did not himself brood on any holocaust, though many French thinkers of the time did indeed attribute romanticism to the defeat of Napoleon, understanding it as an alien ideology forced on them by British and Prussian military might. That is, they did see it as the manifestation of the end of an epoch or the collapse of a 'project', in this case, the Napoleonic rationalisation of Europe. So, an artistic movement, which, through Stendhal

14 Lefebvre 1958. I have used the French edition of the *Passagen-Werk*: Benjamin 1989.

15 Antony Béraud, cited in A.D. Rifkin, unpublished manuscript, *Ingres and the method of academic criticism*. [Editor's note: this manuscript is now superseded by Rifkin 2000].

and Baudelaire, came to equip our modernity with its most enduring tropes, was already perceived by some as the end of a revolution, the Great Revolution of 1789, that itself was, and still is seen as a starting point of the modern world. Anyway, it may be useful to remind ourselves that 'now' is not the first time that something new and something old have got so inextricably mixed up that one cannot quite tell which is which, or in which direction the one or the other is tending to be going. And that this kind of mix up does not have to have anything directly to do with a rerun of debates around the modern, 'ancients and moderns', in the manner of the seventeenth century, or the 'good ancient' and 'bad modern' styles of the fifteenth century, even though it might borrow some of its words from them. It is worth emphasising this last point, as I want to distinguish more convoluted survivals than ones that look alike because of vocabulary.

VI

Here and there in the disparate literature of postmodernism there is a tone of unashamed confusion, sometimes reified into a naming or defining process. Described and accepted as something that '... does not transcend or leave behind the modern ...', but that is '... always already inscribed within the modern ...', the postmodern can indeed be turned into a retroactive category whose presence, once discerned or experienced, offers apparent solutions to conundrums that other modes of explication might make more difficult to achieve. It is a historiographical solipsism. As Henry Sussman, whose words I have just quoted, argues in one of the most recent books on the subject, his *Afterimages of Modernity* (1990), '... postmodern indifference' is '... systematic: it is installed throughout the discourse and mode of postmodernity', which is indeed, 'always ready inscribed ...'. So the kind of contradiction or complexity of position that we find in Adorno 'furnishes us with an instance of a writer whose modernist phase succeeded his postmodernism', and this on the grounds that the Hegelian, yet deconstructive *Negative Dialectics* came *after* the Benjaminesque *Minima Moralia*.¹⁶ In this understanding, postmodernism is like a medical condition that one can get from time to time, or at any time. Sussman's logic, like Lyotard's, should lead to the assertion that there is *only* the modern. Yet this would itself be a hasty conclusion, one that sidesteps historical and textual questions about the conditions of production of either term. And while I can think of no

16 All these from Sussman 1990, p. 184 ff.

good reason why *Minima Moralia* should not be read as an attempt to deal with modernity symptomatically, one could at the same time argue that its glory lies in the singularity of its prejudice, that resists precisely the efflorescence of meanings generated by Benjamin's montage. Its modernity is one of a very different kind, working the diverse gestures of the everyday through a totalising ethical discourse. Sussman's achievement of closure through the discourse of plurality is a minimalist reading of Lyotard's far more complex exposition in his *le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*,¹⁷ which also, none the less, leaves one with a sense of finality all the more complete for its suspense. The aporia of much postmodern theorising comes from the impossibility of its being equipped to discern its own presence.

VII

The canonical origins and institutional histories of the denotation 'modern(ist)', are common to the perspectives of radical or critical cultural theory and conservative forms of the history of art or literature. These also have their links valorised by discourses that share their objects of attention, without themselves being primarily concerned with their modernity. Probably the most commonly accepted moment of the modern is invested in the complex Baudelaire/Poe in particular and, more generally, in the self-conscious reflection on urban experience that they come to represent, as a kind of exchange of distilled intercontinental experience of a common condition. That this might now be seen to prefigure Baudrillard, if you like, is a whimsical teleology that at least has the merit of pointing to the institution of French literature and the formation of a professional and bohemian literary avant garde as a principal vector of Baudelaire's self-identification with modernity as a point of origin. The complex reproduction of this stratum of *littérateurs* is so specific a constant of French culture, that the presence of Poe's *The Purloined Letter* in Lacan's seminar is more like an effect of the habits of (French) modernity and (male) subjectivity than a choice. And Barbara Johnson's (American) commentary on Derrida's commentary on Lacan may be understood as an ironic twist in a modernism, that, for all its psychoanalytical and linguistic reflexivity, proceeds without constructing its history except as text.¹⁸ Here, then, is one passage through canonical modernity in which the origin remains stable even as its dis-

17 Lyotard 1986.

18 See Johnson 1980.

course takes on the postmodern character of the philosophy of non-presence – which, of course, turns out to have been ‘always, already’ the essence of Poe. This academic procedure, true to our time, now seems to be a narrative structured like an American soap opera, a modern form of entertainment designed to be ever open-ended, except that it substitutes the techniques of ‘différence’ for those of suspense.

Here and there in the *Passagen-Werk* Benjamin refers some fifteen times to Roger Caillois’s essay of 1937, *Paris, mythe moderne*, which focuses its analysis of Paris as modern myth around the notion of the savage city, the transmutation of James Fenimore Cooper’s trace-chasing Indian into the city expert, be he criminal or detective. Linking Caillois and Benjamin is their common source, Régis Messac’s great volume of 1929, *Le ‘detective novel’ et l’influence de la pensée scientifique*, which places the serial novel right at the very heart of modern culture and its representations of experience and knowledge.¹⁹ This is a very different understanding of modern experience to another, more moralising tradition that runs from Marx and Engels to Gramsci in a common disapproval, a deep distrust of the corrupting power of commodified pleasures, if only because it takes these pleasures as an address to modern life – an address that is powerful and effective in creating the mythic structures for its living out. The industrial form of the serial, with its highly organised systems of disjuncture, becomes a truly modern cognitive process.

In Benjamin, then, the affectivity that is the experience of complexity in the modern city and that which is the empathy with the commodity are made inseparable through hidden links that overdetermine the relation between the romantic poet and the hack-producer of serial novels, and it is here that he pulls together the threads of so many fields of literary and sociological enquiry. Yet this non-canonical enquiry, this nodal point of Messac-Caillois-Benjamin, with its diverse intellectual and institutional connections, from Surrealism to the Collège de Philosophie, if it is opened up through the sign ‘Baudelaire’, may become just one more prop for a grand narrative of modern(ism). The canon is an effect of the modern(ist) montage. Ironically, the rediscovery of a city-like complexity in Benjamin may, in turn, allow him to be reread as postmodern.

Just as this moment in thinking the modern sustains the kind of genealogy that I outlined in the first paragraph of this section, so its survival predicates its own absences as faults in modernity itself. The question of sexuality and gender is a crucial instance. Indeed, one can perfectly well argue that both Benjamin and Caillois were products of a division within the development of

19 Caillois 1938; Messac 1929.

modern society that generally assigned men to subject – and women to objecthood, narrowly defining these states in terms of public and private space, etc. In *Paris mythe ...*, Caillois typifies the address to the city as modern subjectivity through the invocation of Paris by Sir Williams, the master-in-villainy of Ponson du Terrail's *Rocambole* serial novels. In valuing this passage as he does, Caillois did indeed overlook the very obvious fact that the conflict between good and evil in Ponson is one between Sir Williams and Baccarat, who, as a woman, equally invokes the city as the site and form of her own machinations. Baccarat, it is true, is a fallen woman in repentance, who, only because she has fallen, can be permitted to have such a deep, you might say masculine, knowledge of the city. Yet the status of Baccarat, who is only one of many female 'master'-minds in popular literature of the period, indicates an important contradiction between the requirements of a popular form of modern narrative and a modern division of labour and social space. That Marshall Berman, in his *All that is Solid Melts into Air*, should have been so completely blind to the gendering of the modern is both characteristic of the genealogies of modernism and indicative of contemporary conflicts over the status of this question.²⁰

This fault in the construction of the series of modernity underlies the significance of much recent, feminist work on masquerade and the 'female gaze'. The placing of what was once quaintly called the 'woman question' at the centre of modernity suggests one of the ways in which its re-reading should be prior to its transcendence. Over the years feminists in sociology and art history have turned their attention to this, and have, in various ways, pointed out how the Baudelaireian or avant-gardist paradigm of the modern has for long been understood in such a way as to exclude woman, or reify her as a figment of its own unfolding self-consciousness. This is underlined by the nineteenth-century dominance of physiognomic or anecdotal representation of woman as prostitute or café singer, in which roles she is at least a key to the understanding of the modern as the projection of the *flâneur's* streetlife. Crucially, this modernity excludes the experience of domestic space and labour, that so many modern social historians have been at pains to rediscover, in favour of a field of definition which is essentially one of public life/urban space realised in the singularity of the individual (male) artist. In fact Lefebvre called the bluff on this both by placing woman as the focus of the meaning of the everyday in the *Critique ...* and by problematising masculinity in the 'Oedipus' chapter of the *Introduction ...*

20 See Wolff 1989.

But to return to the idea of masquerade, it is worth noting that, as a process, it resembles a key element in the theoretical matrix of postmodernity. This is the theory of '*différance*', the Derridean revision of Saussure as the critique of the 'metaphysic of presence'. It may well be that this concept is itself an epiphenomenon of the masquerades of gender as a specialised, largely female handling of the social. This can be characterised in the ruses of music-hall stars like Mistinguett or Josephine Baker in the multiplicity of their modes of display, can be seen both to meet the demands of the consumer industries they service, and to conceal them, the performers themselves, as 'inauthentic' beings. The internationalising of the image of a star like Mistinguett, and therefore the fragmented readings of it that are made in different 'national' situations, the varieties of costumes and roles and their reading in different histories of the popular or of glamour, flicker around her in a parade of sexualities and social gestures of which the signifieds never quite meet up with 'her'. And, indeed, a parallel process can be detected in the various forms of male drag that complemented these images of woman in the 1920s and 1930s. In a 1989 exhibition, *la France*, on the theme of woman as the image of the nation, so such figures were to be found, and their exclusion from an exhibition on 'woman' again points to a general myopia towards the role of gender in the structures of modernity, here doubled with homophobia. This is a matter of historically precise social relations, quite distinct from either Freudian or Lacanian theory, though certainly one of the forces that made them possible.²¹

However this demarcation within the theory of the modern, here between 'being' (female) and 'concept' (male) is nowhere more noticeable than in the way it reworks the distinction of public man and public woman as the distinction of authenticity and mask, so that 'We become aware of the writing subject and the masks of identity which she wears and mobilises so deftly', to use the words of Tamar Garb.²² Maréchal Pétain is authentic, and Mistinguett or Colette put it on: indeed put on many appearances. Sartre is a great, Modern Philosopher, de Beauvoir is not, and so forth.²³ From here we can go in any direction in re-reading modernity. How, for example, does this conflation of nature and inauthenticity that is one of the signs of 'woman', operate through the much longer-term cultural device of 'woman' in allegory? In the modernist

21 Catalogue, *La France*, images of woman and ideas of nation, 1789–1989 (London, 1989). An interesting approach to homophobia and modernity can be found in Richard Easton, *Canonical criminalisations, homosexuality, art history, surrealism and abjection*, unpublished MA thesis, University of Leeds (1990). For Lacan, see Macey 1988.

22 Garb 1987–8.

23 Beauvoir 1986.

'death of allegory', either (1) the figure of woman is freed, floating as an aleatory, potential allegorisation of a number of aspects of the social formation, including that of the changing position of women (and in which the drag figure then can be seen as crucial), or (2) as a consequence of this, allegory can only function if it allows a notion of change or of modernisation to reframe the role of woman, as in socialist realism, and so hide allegory in 'reality' or in the process of reality's becoming modern.

Anyway, it does seem to be the case that a very complex mutability of signs and signifieds, a matrix of language implanted in a social matrix of relations, production, consumption, may be a characteristic of historically specific moments and the radically different durations of their components rather than a universal characteristic of language. To sum up to this point, then, the restitution of gender to the definition of the modern opens up a sequence of its unexplored dimensions, of quite long-term processes of the development of the relation between social roles and structures, sexualities and moralities and the formation of their common social *imaginaire*, of which we can provisionally note: (a) that we are not yet in a position to decide if these are either transformed or transcended by the particularities of the last two decades; and (b) that these processes are articulated in quite complicated linguistic conditions, which, while they are often seen as being characteristically postmodern, also have a long history. Ironically, the postmodern claim to plurality is a pre-emptive closure on historical complexity.

A parallel instance of the combination of different economic and ideological durations can be found in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century detective novel. As Messac points out, the conflict between inductive and deductive reason, which stems from classical philosophy, finds an entirely new lease of life in the most popular and vulgarised of all the forms of commercial literature (*Le detective novel ...*, p. 580 ff.).

VIII

If it is reasonable to suggest that the series of the modern remain to be fully established, and if to do so can be seen as a reasonable or worthwhile project – for all that the *Passagen-Werk* is slightly crazy – then another way of proceeding is to play with the relationship between some of modernity's more canonical models to see where else they might belong than to each other. Here the two elements of that exemplary confrontation of Adorno and Benjamin – totalising social theory *v.* experimental montage – can be fundamentally reconsidered as being equally epiphenomena of those forms of modernity that lead to an

aestheticising of social relations. The difference between the formal procedures of the modern artwork and the banal objects of everyday gesture like the new kiosk or the pinball machine, is one that drives a wedge between the philosophical procedures for dealing with them, for all that they may, otherwise understood, be traced to homologous processes as the representation of social philosophies or of the evolution of modern ethics.

Taking, then, Adorno's intentionally structured search for determination and Benjamin's 'philological' method, we could resite them, the one in the other's intended materials. If a philology of artwork can point to the social origins of its formal or science-like characteristics, then, in the case of a composite social sign-system like the news kiosk, we can begin to say that its structure is in some ways like and in tension with wider forms of the social. That is to say, taken as a montage form of the publishing industries and their modes of address to social classes, sexes, sub-fractions of these, etc., and, in its topography, which is an articulation of social distance in proximity, and its adherence to a complex system of laws governing public outrage, etc., together with means of evading them, it comes to work social relations in a negativity analogous to the modern artwork in Adorno's aesthetics. Why should it not, then, like a symphony by Mahler, be the subject and the object of a philosophical discourse? Only, to be able to do this, one must take neither Adorno's nor Benjamin's version of the modern solely in terms of the materials they designated as most appropriate. Rather, both must themselves be read symptomatically, though to undertake this, we do need to resort to a concept of totality. However subtle or unobtainable this might be, like Lévi-Strauss's infinite plotting of unnumbered narratives in the 'Overture' to his *The Raw and the Cooked*,²⁴ it must mark a refusal of the postmodern, which can only read difference as absolute or impossible.

Further, read in this way, *Minima Moralia* can also be seen in a properly negative relation to banality, but in this it shares a problematic with quite unexpected fellows. When Adorno writes: 'The much lauded play-acting of modern artists, their exhibitionism, is the gesture whereby they put themselves as good on the market' (p. 215), the word 'modern' has the full banality of phrases like 'these days' or 'in these times', which are spoken in a much more commonplace lament than his. They express the attitude of different generations in the face of one and the same modernity. Or, more high-flown, the professional *élan* of the Procureurs of the Parisian police facing up to the rise of the culture industries in the *Années Folles*. Take, for example, this comment on a music-hall show that was up for prosecution, but where the witness of the policemen was contradictory:

24 Lévi-Strauss 1969.

Nothing shows better than this divergence of opinions how delicate, these days, is the question at stake. On the one side this is to appreciate the meanings of the mimes and dances, to decide if they constitute expressions of art, or if they are nothing other than the opportunity to give oneself up in public to obscene gestures and contortions. And on the other, to determine up to what point the nude can be tolerated in the theatre, up to what point it can be thought of as a moving work of art and on the contrary, at what point it stops being a sort of homage paid to the beauty of forms to become a straightforward exhibition of nude flesh liable to excite lascivious ideas amongst the public. As M.*** has remarked, 'I believe there is no more reason to incriminate this particular view than any of the other productions given in all the other music-halls of Paris'. (Procureur of Paris, c. 1921)²⁵

For them the problem, whether it took the form of nude shows or pinball machines, was one that Adorno took as crucial to an understanding of modernity. How can one formulate an ethic of change, measure the effect of even a petty technology on the social fabric, on the official structures of law and morality, when the market is the privileged site in which the modern is made flesh? Aporia is not the sole privilege of philosophy, any more than is modernity itself.

Here we may justifiably bring in what can be called a kind of psychological routine in economic processes of the industrial production and distribution of culture – the gradual fillings of the world with industrial culture and the rate at which awareness of this develops and responds to it. In 1903–4, the automatic meter was introduced to the taxis of Paris. In Colette's novel, *L'ingénue libertine* (1904, 1925), the heroine Minne relaxes, tapping her feet to its soothing rhythm after a narrow escape from being caught in pursuit of marital infidelity. Jules Romains, in volume III of his modern epic, *Les hommes de bonne volonté* (1932–), records its meaning on a hard-pressed member of the older aristocracy:

What I most hold against the meters, said the marquess, is that, throughout the journey, you are obliged to think of the price you will pay, and it goes up minute by minute before your eyes ... Imagine that in a restaurant, at every mouthful you swallow, the bill goes up before you, written on a dial, from two sous, from ten sous. That would be odious.

25 Paris, Archives Nationales, Ministry of Justice, BB18/6173. See also 'Down on the upbeat' in this volume.

The count was of the opinion that this affront, for such it was, was a part of the general vulgarity of the epoch.²⁶

Meanwhile, out in the streets, idlers queue up to get a glimpse at one.

The meter has a referent, probably the length of a ride, but it emerges as differential sign, a polyseme read through the social difference that frames its technological modernity. But what is its signified? How to tell post- and modern apart at this level of the everyday? I could go through the same exercise with the barrel organ and the *accordéon*, to show something of the differential times within popular memory in the context of the modern technologies of entertainment as they develop, replace each other, and give rise to new nostalgias. Suffice it to emphasise that the example of the taximeter is only one amongst many.

IX

However many 'moderns' we might generate at whatever level of either aesthetic complexity or daily usage, it is most useful to see that all these have their own time and their own rhythm of development, and are also deposits of each other's different timescales. The notion of differential time as the crucial problematic of history writing runs from Marx to the Annales School, and links them to structural anthropology. Along with the concept of overdetermination, the axis of modernity commonly embodied in Marx and Freud, it forms part of the possibility of thinking the modern as temporally specific. Yet this plotting of long-term series of both continuous and discontinuous phenomena is a process that has generally come to be felt as inappropriate to cultural studies or cultural critique, which work primarily off either the symptomatic reading of a given 'conjuncture' or the projection of theoretical models into a potential instance. (The business of attributing social meaning to canonical artworks typifies the former, while the latter can be exemplified in the elaboration of 'gaze' theory.) And if we arrive at a point when overdetermination is reduced to a technique of decoding, then historical and critical studies are set to collide. This is uneven development. Maybe overdetermination is all that is left of the Freud-Marx paradigm of the modern. And if so, an unfinished project of modernity is learning the most fruitful ways of dealing with this as a relation with the real, realised as overdetermined. An end of modernity might have to

26 Romain 1932, p. 147.



FIGURE 45 Taximeter. From *L'Illustration*, 1904.

be either the end only of a very temporary mode of reference, such as 'these days', or if more than this, an end of time. This outcome could only emerge if it really doesn't matter that things are modern, nor how.

Benjamin's Paris, Freud's Rome: Whose London?*

Unreal City, ...

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn
A crowd flowed across London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.¹



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* An image has been omitted from this chapter.

1 This essay might be thought of as my own contribution to the course 'Cities and Film' which I taught over a period of five years to both BA and MA students in the Department of Fine Art, Art History and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds. I owe a debt of gratitude to all those whose discussion stimulated my own desire to write this. In respect of the specific preparation of the piece my thanks go to Frank Mort and David Oppedisano for their critique and help.

References to the films in this article are all drawn from the standard video editions and bibliographies, including original film reviews, and other subsequent commentaries are all downloaded from the database at the British Film Institute library. Images are from Studio Canal edition, 2004. The most important single study of *The Ladykillers* for what follows is Kemp 1991. Kemp makes some interesting points concerning the film as Mrs Wilberforce's dream. For a 'realist' and nostalgic tracing of the settings for this film see Gavin Stamp 'Dreams and nightmares of a changing city', in *The Times Saturday Review*, 31 November 1990, p. 22. The problem of location, set and the representability of London is a fascinating question in all the films I discuss here, and continues to be up to Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1969), for example. Interestingly enough, in the post-war period the single film with what appears to be the most numerous outside locations and actual interiors is Jules Dassin's thriller *Night and the City* (1950), and it is worth wondering about what it means to come to London from the outside with a project in mind – that of exploring greed and money in San Francisco, London and Marseille. In all Dassin has 54 locations and 14 interiors.

For a broad summary of London films, see <http://www.uk.imbd.com>.

Eliot 1937, p. 63, line 60.

[At the Wheel]

Surely every man who has driven through the fog with eyes that ache and imagined phantoms at each cross-road will be glad to raise his hat to the bulky figure behind the wheel of a London omnibus as he steers his living cargo to safety with no thought of praise – because it's all in a day's work?

Under the Dome

I was cheered to find that St. Paul's looked quite firm and permanent when I walked up Ludgate hill the other morning. How deceptive are the works of man! Who would have guessed that this mountain was feeling its age a bit, moving ever so slightly under the weight of its Dome.²

This essay sets out to read cinematic, theoretical and psychoanalytic texts that either directly concern the city or which are articulated via an imagery of the urban; and to do this through a consideration of the phantasmatic forms of the particular city that they relate. In such a short piece I will inevitably engage in very little close reading, and restrict myself rather to a more general framing of or mapping of the conditions for such a reading. I will assume the elements of my title, the particular relationship between Sigmund Freud and Rome on the one hand and Walter Benjamin and Paris on the other, as a cultural given. But this is clearly a functional simplification which, I believe, stands up to examination, for all that Benjamin wrote of many cities, and Freud's love of Italy was infinitely more expansive than his infatuation with Rome.

Indeed, it is a commonplace of the history of psychoanalysis that Sigmund Freud was so inspired by Italy and its great cities, Naples, Milan, Venice and Rome, that we have to think of his excitement as a fundamental and necessary condition for the invention of the 'talking cure' and its vast theoretical elaboration by him. As Antonietta and Gérard Haddad have recently written, '[P]sychonanalysis and Italy reveal themselves ... to be narrowly interwoven. Freud elaborated his work in a ceaseless to and fro between Vienna and Italy. *He went there more than twenty times*'.³ Rome he was to visit in 1901, only after he had completed *The Interpretation of Dreams*,⁴ a journey which he related to the

² Morton 1937, pp. 25–7.

³ Haddad and Haddad 1995.

⁴ Freud 1975.

conclusion of this great period of work. And while the voyage onward to Pompeii was to provide him with a primary image or metaphor of the lava-covered strata of lost experience, Rome is to reappear in strength in *Civilisation and its Discontents* as one crucial stage in his attempt to develop a viable metaphoric for the human mind.⁵ Yet already in *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud has written of the importance of his frustration in never having been to the city, and he has already outlined the beginnings of this later metaphor: '[day-time phantasies] stand in much the same relation to the childhood memories from which they are derived as do some Baroque palaces of Rome to the ancient ruins whose pavements and columns have provided the material for more recent structures'.⁶

In *Civilisation* ... this becomes a more layered exploration in the unfolding of two possible metaphors: first, if crocodiles persist as a living reminder of the earliest stages of animal development, then second, the ruins of Rome might likewise suppose the continuous existence of materials that, once brought into being, persist for evermore. But such lost or partial materials are significantly visible only as they conjuncturally and momentarily appear as the meaning of otherwise-determined conscious representations. Freud's purpose in trawling these comparisons is to find an adequate image for the persistence of pre-Oedipal elements of the human subject, which, as they sometimes surface and force their pre-linguistic figure into the conscious mind, give rise to the 'oceanic' feeling, the sense of a profound and inexplicable sense of the unity of the being and the world – that is to say, the delusion of religion. In effect, after jettisoning the image of the saurian leftover that is the crocodile, he also turns against his Roman metaphor, renouncing it as having any substantial value for a mapping of the human mind. But he does this on the rather literal grounds that edifices cannot physically exist in all their various forms and successive rebuildings from early to late Roman, from early Christian to Baroque:

There is clearly no point in spinning our phantasy any further, for it leads to things that are unimaginable and even absurd. If we want to represent historical sequence in spatial terms we can do it only by juxtaposition in space: the same space cannot have two different contents. Our attempt seems to be an idle game. It has only one justification. It shows us how far

5 Freud 1962.

6 Freud 1975, p. 633.

we are from mastering the characteristics of mental life by representing them in pictorial terms.⁷

Yet 'clarity' is hardly the point of Freud's own phantasmatic excursus into this metaphor, and precisely what the three pages preceding his withdrawal have left us with is a powerful way of daydreaming the mind as city and the city as if it were the mind. That Freud retracts his image in the name of reason should not hide from us the passage through his thinking of those great representations of the city as human subject which go back to Charles Baudelaire and Edgar Allen Poe, and which Benjamin was to take up as offering a possible access to the future-perfect tense of capitalism in its origins in the *Passagen-Werk*. In an important sense Benjamin's whole obsession with Paris might be understood as a Freudian gesture in the spirit of *Civilisation and its Discontents*, but one that he was neither able nor willing to foreclose; what he once described to Gershom Scholem as a matter of a few months' visit to deal with Paris turned into the sojourn that we know. Benjamin's entrapment by Paris has in effect left us with *its* figure as that of the lost futurity of capital, in the economic sense of the word and, at the same time, as the presiding substratum of cityness in general as a mental percept. For what is now nigh on some forty years of urban theory and history writing, Benjamin's vision has interacted with a variety of literary or art-historical narratives of cultural modernity as quintessentially French and Parisian in such a way as to make it difficult to name other modernities which invite our empathy with capital. Benjamin and historical ruin stand in for each other in his writing and its historical afterlife, and in so doing elide the ur-being of cities, or capitals, that are not Paris, either in their own substantive history or as an alternative modality of historical process.

But to understand this is to begin to approach the figural problem of London, which is the focus of my essay. Not surprisingly, the narratives which London incites often seem not quite to belong to the name 'London', but rather to have come to it. In part this must be because, at a certain point in the histories of its becoming a figure for modernity – and I am addressing myself here only to modern London – it loses itself to a number of external discourses. One of the most striking examples of this is precisely the phenomenon of the Benjaminian construction of the modern city as the Paris of Baudelaire – but as a city which always and already includes London. For while the Benjaminian vector of urban modernity is worked through an archive of exemplary density,

7 Freud 1962.

and of essentially Parisian texts, objects and images, it can be argued that it hangs together around a London motif – that of the ‘man in the crowd’. This transposition of Edgar Allen Poe’s *imagined* London into one of Baudelaire’s representations of the city adheres the crazy, mannered figure of an English obsessionality, hardly able to cope with the flux and motion of street life in which it must exist, to that of the *flâneur* who above all deals with shock aesthetically. In effect, London is Parisianised by this gesture, processed into a protocol that brings it into theory through the borrowed clothing of Parisian modernity. Thus, the distinction between London and Paris which Benjamin suggests we make through that between Poe’s relatively neutral ‘man in the crowd’ and Baudelaire’s deeply complicit *flâneur* is not only lost in the historiography of cities, but is provoked in Benjamin’s text itself, in his repetitious return to the latter of these two figures; which may itself just be thought of as an illicit and negative effect of London, transmitted to him via Poe or Dickens.⁸

It is not surprising then if, in comparison to Paris, London comes to be celebrated as an unsatisfactory city. Major representations of London, from the writing of Edgar Allen Poe or Charles Dickens to the films of Patrick Keiller, make this clear enough – as do substantial attempts at physical replanning from John Nash to Patrick Abercrombie. While Poe’s London is as mysterious as his Paris – and he knew neither city – it is probably something more of a nightmare, more shocking in the physical sense of the word, less available for the kind of rapt *dénouement* that may conclude one of Dupin’s Parisian thrillers. Dickens’s London is too well known and the debates around it too intense for me to engage with them at any length here – though I will have to return to David Lean’s film of *Great Expectations* (1947). However, I should say that I take the side of those who argue that Dickens is out to produce or to invent London rather than to record it or tell stories about it. London is not so much a metaphor for the convoluted and impenetrable complexities of social and legal relations of his novels, such as *Bleak House*, as the object to be invented through them, a *mise-en-scène* held together, after or around the effects of narrative. So Dickens expresses not so much a fear of the great miasmic city as

8 See Benjamin 1973, pp. 48–54 for this discussion. Benjamin also sets out to distinguish London and Berlin through the difference between Poe’s man in the crowd and E.T.A. Hoffmann’s man ‘at his corner window’ (p. 48). But the attentive reader of this chapter, ‘The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire’, will surely see that the dynamic of Benjamin’s attraction to Paris in the swinging of his text is in excess of the logic of his comparisons so that Poe’s man or Dickens’s wanderings in effect serve as an empty *différand* from Paris rather than as substantially other kinds of trope.

a desire for such a fear to be real, present in narrative, and giving an emotional form to the narrative that London might otherwise destroy and strip of any meaning.⁹

Patrick Keiller, in his film *London* (1994), is wholly undecided between an archaeology or recovery of the past and the projection of an imaginary historical unity onto the present, in his attempt to decide what it is that the city might still be. If his essentially literary-historical view of the city as having already been told now requires him to retell it in recognisable form if he is to save it from oblivion, then his attempt trips over itself in the most current possible present, that of the giant Brent Cross shopping centre; it is here that he finds Walter Benjamin being read, in a commodity space beyond redemption, rather than in the nineteenth-century moment when the 'hollowing out' of the human subject by empathy for the commodity was still an impulse of poetics. In the end *London* turns to the family structures and working life of the more recently immigrant strata of the population to project a phantasm of primordial community, effectively and critically blocking the notion that the city was ever truly present as available for recognition, other than as the projection of some desire that London cannot satisfy.

The space between Dickens and Keiller might then be thought of as one of the iterative enactment of the swing between an exteriority or strangeness that is felt as if within and from without the city subject. London is turned into narrative on an uneasy borderline between the terms 'other-to-oneself' and 'other-as-oneself', an indeterminacy which itself produces an unsatisfactoriness or a frustration registered as much in Eliot's poetics in my opening quotations as in H.V. Morton's prosaics.

It is interesting here to take a London book of 1935 written by the French literary commentator Paul Cohen-Portheim, *The Spirit of London*, and to tease out other traces of this trope, or negative oceanic feeling, if I might here play with Freud's orderings of mental formation.¹⁰ In his preface to the book Raymond Mortimer hails the recently deceased Portheim as a true European, one '[e]qually at home on the Zattere and the Kurfürstendamm, in the rue de Lappe and in Islington',¹¹ a characterisation which places him, after his long experience of the city, in an unusual position to apprehend it both from within and without. And, indeed, this double apperception is precisely Portheim's strategic particularity, a recognising of a specific urban density which is not

9 A current and highly sophisticated account of these problematics is to be found in Wolfeys 1998.

10 Cohen-Portheim 1935.

11 Cohen-Portheim 1935, p. vi.

quite adequate to cathexis in the absence of activation by some kind of Other. At one point, in a strange presaging of Patrick Keiller's flatness and let-down tone, he writes that '[Y]ou only have to cross Piccadilly to leave Mayfair for St James's, and you will come to a London where time has stood still, though it is not quite easy to say exactly when it decided to do that'.¹² The witticism chimes with his assertion that

[F]ew cities have a greater number of interesting and notable streets than London, and certainly none has a greater number of monotonous and featureless ones. It is the only great capital built on the system of the small one-family house; and that is why, when you get away from the central parts, you find acres of streets of undistinguished little houses ...¹³

This is to say that even in its central dynamic, London might be as entropic as in its purely residential areas; and if the town within a town that is St James (the exclusively male sociability that characterises it is unchanged since the eighteenth century, despite its outward trappings), this does not strike his reader as much more attractive than the 'acres' of the 'undistinguished'. Petticoat Lane on the contrary is '[n]ot only alive, but teeming, swarming, screeching, and bellowing on its market-day'. This '[m]ost picturesque ghetto of western Europe ...' is '[p]ossibly the most surprising of the countless and ever-varied London districts, a few of which I have here described'.¹⁴

Portheim discloses what we would now call London's hybridity as its access to some kind of affective plenitude and he goes on to argue that, if there is no English equivalent '[f]or the French *se promener dans la rue*', then '[t]he East End does "promenade" all the same ...' Even if the '[j]oy and gaiety' of East End roads may depend as much on a lack of home comfort as love of the street, then nonetheless it is the Jews of Whitechapel who have reinvented the '*Corso*' – '[I] know of nothing quite like it in the more purely English parts of popular London, yet I have observed it in some big provincial cities of the North of England'.¹⁵ Something of this foreignness or hybridity also holds for him in Tottenham Court Road, the 'most Parisian' of London Streets, but in the writing of a London chronicler like H.V. Morton the same phenomenon is abject and disgusting, though its vitality nonetheless forces itself upon him. For Morton, Petticoat Lane is a repulsive melting pot of vile oriental stereotypes, strange

12 Cohen-Portheim 1935, p. 17.

13 Cohen-Portheim 1935, p. 33.

14 Cohen-Portheim 1935, p. 32.

15 Cohen-Portheim 1935, p. 35.

combinations – '[t]he eyes of Ruth ... with the larynx of Bill Sykes [*sic*] ...', while Limehouse's Chinese population, which Portheim finds 'disappointing' – they wear European dress – he can assimilate into a generalised quaintness of ethnically different people wrapped up in their own little lives.¹⁶ Clearly it is important to note that with both these writers the figures of ethnic and class difference are written across each other, and that this is not simply a matter of the trope of slumming. Rather, it registers a deeply problematic disparity between modes of access to the city; in which, obviously enough, money plays a distinct and divisive role. This is revealed in the way in which money is handled, expressing either the libidinous variety of the other even in the tiny transactions of Petticoat Lane, or the vacuous rigour of formal wealth in clubland – the street market on the one hand, St James's on the other.

'The Waste Land' resumes this figural complexity in its swinging between populist vernacular and symbolist poesis, the formal beauty of the City and the unfathomable wealth of otherness as a slippage of money's glamour: 'Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead, / Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell / And the profit and the loss'.

So, framed like this, and eighty years after it was written, T.S. Eliot's repeated linking of the words 'unreal' and 'London' in 'The Waste Land' is an almost unremarkable introduction to that city or to its heartland, the City, whose image as a space of churches and of finance, a palimpsest of world trade and poetic resources, is a structure of the poem. The juxtaposition is perhaps overly accurate and too readily acceptable to need much commentary, even though Eliot disturbs his conjugation in putting 'unreal' now before and now after 'London'. Here, on line 70, it comes before; but on line 376 it arrives at the end of a shortlist of other cities, so that the two syllables of 'London' fall directly on its three – 'unreal' – in such a way as to emphasise the specificity of their relation, despite the immediate precedence of Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria and Vienna. But even today anyone of a literary bent who rides the number 253 bus from Aldgate right round East and North and back down to Euston will tend to agree with Eliot, whether because they will then witness such a superfetation of realities as to defy any resolution into a unified concept of the city as a functioning symbolic system; or, at a less theoretical level, because London's unending transformation of visual densities and social differences makes Los Angeles seem simply pastoral. London remains confounding and unsatisfactory. If, in Jacques Lacan's terms, the real is the excluded residuum of the production of the symbolic, the outside to all those discourses which constitute

16 Morton 1937, 'Oriental', pp. 11–15, and Morton 1926, 'The Chinese New Year', pp. 124–8.

us as a subject, what we see from the 253 bus will deconstitute us as psychotic, were we for one moment to identify with it as reality.¹⁷ 'Unreal city' ... is a good fiction for an alibi, even as Eliot's rhetoric conjures a powerful presence, an excess of effect which registers the choric being of the real and the object of desire.

It echoes down in different kinds of culture. We find it right at the beginning of the Ealing comedy film *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951), for example. The title sequence frames a series of tight, claustrophobic shots of the Royal Exchange, Mansion House and the Bank of England, sharply lighted with deep black and white contrast and a long depth of focus, so that the buildings butt up airlessly against each other, squeezing out the sky, constricting the circulation of the traffic, the taxis and the buses. Gazing at the heart of Britain and its power of finance feels stifling, like seeing through a prison's bars. From the title we cut to a sunny tropical terrace, languidly rhythmic music, a parrot on its perch in profile against the sunlit wall. In the blazing luxury of a South American club-restaurant the hero, Mr Holland (Alec Guinness), begins to narrate his great theft of the Bank of England's gold to a civil-servant type who will turn out to be his captor. As he speaks of his ambition to have a life of ease, to escape from his being '... merely ... uh ... merely a nonentity amongst those thousands who flock every morning into the city ...', the screen is filled with Eliot's image, the 'undone' thousands of the living dead who stream across the bridge, compressed into a single body, a hypertrophic common identity as the slaves of capital, wrapped in unremitting grey, a moral fog; and then, swiftly, the scene cuts back to light clothes and flowing gestures, the easy sexuality of the Latin phantasy. The possession of money is broken from the prisonhouse of the city; it is magically desublimated through its perversion to a sign of polymorphous pleasures that exceed its rigorous grid of its streets and columns. Holland hands out cheques and banknotes, a tip to the waiter, a present to his girlfriend and charitable contributions with a freedom that defies the constraints of dead and accumulated capital.¹⁸

H.V. Morton's rather bland, self-assured and anecdotal *flâneries* were some of the most successful and popular depictions of London in the period between the wars. Yet at first sight, so satisfied with their post-Baudelairean or Poe-esque elaboration of banal and reactionary urban stereotypes, they nonetheless offer

17 For a detailed summary of the possible use of the terms real, imaginary, symbolic etc., see both Roudinesco and Plon 1997, and Laplanche and Pontalis 1967.

18 See the remarkable essay on *The Lavender Hill Mob* by Richard Hornsey, forthcoming in *Art History*, for an account of the gay perversion of gold into a gay sexual expenditure and its symbolising in this film.

some unsettling metonyms. Between the ending of his section on bus transport and the beginning of his pages on St Paul's, Morton slips between three figures of mountainous convexity; the hat, the driver and the Dome. At the same time passage between the two episodes amounts to a contradiction or a reversal of metaphoric sense, which should lead us to suspect that we cannot take the superficial effect of one convex alongside the other as an elegant and controlled figurative slippage. Rather, all three have turned up there to stand in for something else, perhaps the real *London* which is the title and subject of his book. While the first two convexes emerge as an affirmation of certainty despite, and therefore because of, the surrounding fog, which they overcome, the third is deceptive in its stillness. Time is eating away at the cathedral, through the very agency of its surmounting symbol – in a happily inverted premonition of the lightweight millennium dome of Greenwich today, unsurely anchored in its bed of noxious slime and infill rubble. So if the strange, slow, dark journey of the bus is a triumph over the time that space becomes in fog, St Paul's hints rather at time's eventual triumph over the very possibility of finding an adequate symbol of London. Absurdly, of course; given that eight years after this edition of Morton's book the Dome alone would still be there, to stand in for the lost fabric of bombed-out London after World War II.¹⁹

In one of the very few location scenes in David Lean's film of Dickens's *Great Expectations* the protagonist, Pip, journeys up to London taking the viewer across a schematic yet picturesque map of the road, countryside and towns that frame his approach to the city; but as he opens his eyes to the promised land itself, we see the great Dome in a carefully angled shot of St Paul's that evades surrounding chaos.²⁰ There it is, still floating above the City, even if the price of its representation is the exclusion of its circumstances – an exclusion naturalised by the *mise-en-scène* of Dickens's epoch, the peeling façades of the sets of Little Britain, seedy legal offices, cavernous courtrooms and an execution yard. All of which, in effect, in their volumetric intricacies, rhymings and contradictions, surround its simplistic convexity with the web of their spatial complexities. And it is here, in the densities of what might have been a nostalgic figuration, that the hidden narratives and geographies of Dickens's story entrain with them a process of overdetermining decay that also corrodes the fullness and stability of the image of the Dome. If Pip's new life really begins with the coach driver's utterance 'London!' and the camera's gesture to St Paul's, its disruption through the uncertainties and perversions of

19 H.V. Morton 1937, Plate 70.

20 See *Ourselfs in Wartime*, London: Odhams, n.d., and Sorensen 1996, p. 121.

law, criminality, money and love has already been seeded in the alien mists of the Essex marshes. It will be the gloomy forces of a powerful outsidersness that are to make (non-)sense of Pip's intentions in his story, of his over-confident assumption of a narrative that is not the one he is really living out; it will be these forces that allow London to signify, to be of the order of the *signifiant*.

It is now clear enough that this theme of outside-ness will echo throughout my essay, and that I am concerned primarily with the repetitions of the figure of exteriority in the topography of London stories. For it does indeed appear to be a structuring trope for a range of discourses from the guidebook to urban theory and from the detective novel to light, cinematic comedy. So while outside-ness is at once abject and all powerful in both the novel and the film of *Great Expectations*, there subverting London's integrity through playing it out across a world map of subterranean criminality and legal manipulation, it may also take on the forms of comedy or parodic horseplay, masquerading the uncanny as a matter of harmless entertainment. And this combination of the elements of a winsome narcissism that identifies itself in quite specific stereotypes with a range of cinematic conventions and histories begins to condense into something that we might call a London symbolic.

It is the need to frame this notion and to pick out something of its complex desiring structures that leads me to the writing of Jacques Lacan. In the fifth volume of his seminars, *Les formations de l'inconscient*, Lacan writes of the beginnings of meaning in the following terms, which might provide us with at least a useful analogy for the fairly simple combination of basic elements that we have begun to observe in poetic and filmic scenarios of London. Writing of the 'ultra-precocious' introduction of the maternal object into the process of symbolisation, he says:

Dites-le-vous bien – dès que l'enfant commence simplement à pouvoir opposer deux phonèmes, ce sont déjà deux vocables. Et avec deux, celui qui les prononce et celui auquel ils sont adressés, c'est-à-dire l'objet, sa mère, il y a déjà quatre éléments, ce qui est assez pour contenir virtuellement en soi toute la combinatoire d'où va surgir l'organisation du signifiant.²¹

[Tell this to yourself: as soon as the child simply begins to be able to oppose two phonemes, these are already two words. And with two, s/he

21 Lacan 1998, p. 222.



FIGURE 46 *The Ladykillers*, Dir. Alexander Mackendrick, 1955, Ealing Studios. Mrs Wilberforce declines Professor Marcus's offer of advance rent. Thanks to Studio Canal edition, 2004.

who utters them, and that to which they are addressed, that is to say the object, the mother, there are already four elements, which is enough in itself to hold virtually all the combinatory [forms] from which the organisation of the signifier will arise.]

The point appears, deceptively of course, to be quite a simple one; Lacan is arguing for a starting point, or a moment of reduction to the minimal elements of what may then become an infinite complexity. Yet even within the schematically reduced relation of 'four elements' there is the already ongoing process of the symbolising of the maternal object via the phallus or the name of the father on the one hand, and the production of need through the sign of desire on the other. In effect the coexistence of need and desire as if need were an autonomous force in the realisation of the subject, taken with the disappearance of the object behind the signifier, is deeply puzzling. It is a configuration that shuffles and unsettles any certainty about what is in and outside the subject, and it is this sense of a radical puzzlement that I want to bring to London.

How, for example, might our awareness of such a puzzlement enable us even just to set out on a description of the shot from *The Ladykillers* (1955) in Figure 46, rather in the same spirit as we might risk getting on the number 253 bus? The scene, from near the beginning of the film, shows Mrs Wilberforce, the Lady of the title, receiving her new lodger, 'Professor Marcus', who is to



FIGURE 47 *The Ladykillers*, Dir. Alexander Mackendrick, 1955, Ealing Studios. Mrs Wilberforce explains Amelia's dream to the Police. Thanks to Studio Canal edition, 2004.

use her lopsided, bomb-damaged house, the perfect relic of a lost Victorian and colonial London, as the base for his magnificent and perfect crime, the robbery of £60,000. We could begin quite literally by saying that there are three elements in the first instance – the Professor, Mrs Wilberforce and a Parrot. We, the viewer, must be the fourth, and enter into subjecthood through the combinations of ourselves with these. Mrs Wilberforce certainly represents the past of London, a London that has survived the transformation of modernity and the disfiguration of the war, a city which maintains a fierce autonomy and a sense of being for itself. For fierce and persistent Mrs Wilberforce truly is: a baby screams as she coos into its pram; the police shrink evasively as she enters their station to explain that her friend Amelia did *not* see a space ship the previous week; her neighbours and shopkeepers greet her with respect (Figure 47). But it is also important that, though a widow, she is not a mother. On the contrary, as her role evolves, both through the narrative of her relations with the criminals whose plans she unintentionally confutes, and her relentless control of the street, or her disregard for any use of the streets other than her own, it becomes clear that she functions as the Law. It is Mrs Wilberforce who determines the borderlines between dream and non-dream, appearances and signs, sense and chaos. If she does stand in for London, then London's nostalgia is a trap – a trap laid to lure the desire for the mother, to snare it in the phallic system which alone will give it meaning. In *The Lavender Hill Mob*, too, Holland's landlady plays out the same ambivalence; old, frail, dotty, charming,

she wastes his time of dreaming, plotting, scheming his crime in having him read American thriller fiction to her.

In this speculative scenario the Professor and the Parrot enjoy a complex significance. We have already seen that in *The Lavender Hill Mob* a parrot figures as the first sign of an exotic antinomy to London. Here, in *The Ladykillers*, it is both deep inside and from outside London at one and the same time (Figure 46). A relic from colonial adventure, the pet of Mrs Wilberforce's late husband, it both functions as an unconscious natural force that subverts and diverts the conscious, intentionally directed actions of the characters as they chase it over the roofs in one scene, and as a model for the repetitious function of the film itself in its repetition of the thriller genre. For if, at a superficial glance, it looks as if there are three parrots in the shot, then the Professor himself is first sighted as a repetition of an image from German Expressionist cinema. It is as Mrs Wilberforce asks the shopkeeper in whose window she has posted her advert for a lodger if there have been enquiries that we see his hat reflected in the glass, dark in a sudden rainstorm, a reminder of Fritz Lang's *M*, followed by a sequence of shots in which the hat circles round her house as we see her pottering inside. Subjected to this threatening gaze, she eventually produces it as nothing more than the effect of her own being, a partial subject of her primitive rootedness at the origins of signification, just after the effacement of the maternal object.

This play between, and form of, narrative given from outside London and the particularity of the London which it renders visible and which, in turn, perverts it, is again a central figure of *The Lavender Hill Mob*. As we have seen, it invades the cosy nostalgia of the living room as Holland reads to his landlady, exciting her with the thriller's kitschily erotic dangers. And when Holland and his accomplice-to-be in crime, Pendlebury, go late at night to check up the latter's safe in his souvenir factory, they are surprised by a petty criminal whose shadow looms over them in a dramatic parody of Murnau's *Nosferatu* at the point when the vampire mounts the staircase to take his victim. Of course in London this expressionist terror turns to bathos, and there is no victim. But in its harmonising of the criminal narrative with a kind of Dickensian eccentricity and chaos, we are left with the frustrating sense that London is both never quite enough and yet infinitely absorbent. If, indeed, in *The Lavender Hill Mob*, it is to be the casting of stolen gold as souvenir Eiffel Towers that produces both a figure for and means of escape from London, there is no eventual density of otherness that can disperse its power. At the end of the film we realise that Holland is handcuffed to his interlocutor and that London's most direly bland stereotype has come to claim him back.



FIGURE 48 *The Ladykillers*, Dir. Alexander Mackendrick, 1955, Ealing Studios. Parrot food and the presence of the pre-conscious. Thanks to Studio Canal edition, 2004.

To return, then, to my quotation from Lacan, we can begin to trace an outline of London as a specific urban figure, one that strains against Freud's Rome in the strangeness of its registers of presence. It would have been easy to go for London as the *petit objet à*, to think of London as desire's irremediably unfulfillable character. Rather I have wanted to suggest that London, more often than not, in Eliot or Portheim, Morton or Ealing Comedy, figures the difficulty of an obsessional and neurotic desire to see it as our object rather than to accept how or that we are its subjects. A process of signification congeals around a set of stereotypes that include the reader or the viewer, but which, in their very inadequacy, imperially recruit otherness to give them substance, only then to outlive narrative form, which is itself the gift of otherness. A few moments before the shot in Figure 46 Mrs Wilberforce has left the hall of her house to fetch the Professor a set of keys. As she turns from him and walks through a door, her voice remains at the same level of loudness, it is left suspended in our hearing, along with the sound of parrots, railway trains and all the other aural paraphernalia of the film, even as she disappears. This suspense both splits the sign in an uncanny substitution of one of its parts for the whole and suggests that the whole is ever-present, even at the moment of its disappearance. At the same time it reminds us that the film begins with Mrs Wilberforce recounting Amelia's dream, which she attributes to her friend's dozing off as she listens to the radio, to a children's programme on visitors from space. The outside, immaterial voice of radio too is a condition of narrative, dreaming or awake.

I want to argue that of all cities, it is London that is marked by this frustrating yet alluring lack of plenitude's illusion, and that in his elaboration of the formation of the unconscious, it is Lacan who can help us to live with this. At the same time, the city is Mrs Wilberforce's, she wins out, like the true religion, the law of the father disguised in the trappings of a phantasmatic and deceptive motherliness. At the end of the film the stolen loot, all £60,000 of it, reverts to her, and she will spend it on a new umbrella, give it to the beggar, as libidinous in her own way as Holland in South America.

Ironically, if Lacan can be our guide in this, then we must admit that London defeats us rather as he thought that Rome defeated reason. In a recent article in the French journal *Lignes* Jacqueline Risset recounts a drive around the eternal city with the great analyst-philosopher:

It was during the Easter days, and the great, white silent limousine which had been put at the disposition of the *savant* by his friend the ambassador ... [a]dvanced slowly through the almost empty streets of the baroque centre. And Jacques Lacan, looking upon the domes, suddenly said in a sweet and melancholy voice: '*they are going to win ...*' Then, after a contemplative silence, and still in the same sweet voice, he added: '*They have gratifications to offer; we have none ...*'²²

Can it be that seen from the bumpy, almost dangerous time warp of the number 253 bus, London too will win, in all its terrible refusal?

22 Risset 1998, pp. 28–32.

Bayreuth, World City? Or: The Provincial Village as Global *Denkmal* ...

The title that I have chosen is a question and a conceit. It deliberately raises the larger question or definition of what a world city is. It is a conceit both as a figure of speech, but also my own conceit, invented as a talisman against writing another essay on Paris, a city that now seems to me to be a stuffy and provincial corner of a worn-out process of thinking history, hardly a world city at all. And like all the cities of the old paradigm of modernity, the Haussmanian version roughly speaking, it appears tiny and simple compared to Mumbai, São Paulo or Tokyo. New York too, especially since 9/11, or 11/9 as good 'old Europeans' would write it, has become the seat of a self-regarding marginality that can only be confirmed by the background din of crashing banks. That's how I feel when I visit these cities, read their press or correspond with colleagues and friends who live in them and demand attention for them. The American cultural left mourning 9/11 in art and writing is a new figure of cultural domination, but always and already failing.

So if Paris and Manhattan are hopelessly provincial, yet continue to make their factitious claims to being world cities, why should not the city that is evidently provincial also be a world city – but in a way that is everything to do with its being a stuffy, dull little town with an unstable and rather abject political history: briefly independent in the eighteenth century, transferred to Prussia in 1791 and back to Bavaria by Napoleon before losing any autonomy when it finally suited the German Empire? What would thinking this mean for our notion of 'world'? This is the conceit, the conceit of an 'old Europe' that might still find some unexplored 'other' in its stuffiest and dustiest corners.

My own conceit(-edness) is that, despite its clearly provincial qualities, I believe that I have always understood Bayreuth to be a world city. Or at least a city of world significance for me, before I even knew where it was, or that it was anything more than a name pronounced as the source of some broadcasts on the BBC Third Programme about half a century ago. For even this far-off announcement was exactly that; far away, but brutally present in my adolescent

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here and now, immediate, – even though the opera stories were ones of long ago, as if there ever were such a time as long ago. So in this way I knew that there was more to life than Tolkien or the Passover story, another whole world somewhere, sonorous and compelling. And the name for this world was Bayreuth. What follows does not pretend to be a scholarly study of the relation between the global and the local, but rather a light-hearted exploration of this double-faced conceit.

The conjunction of figures from which I now set out comes from the last moments of my observation of Bayreuth over two summer festivals. First, in the Festspielhaus, in August 2005, a performance of *Parsifal*; things are going badly. Christoph Schlingensief's production seems to me an utter disaster, however much I admire some of his work as a video and installation artist. Projection over projection, through projection and counter-projection, splitting of characters into doubles, triples, parts, burning of light effects onto the retina that hold and hurt the gaze, the whole rendering the set undecipherable and the singers indistinct. You can see, hysterically, but hardly hear, energy so consumed by vision that the music passes by as the ghost at the feast. It sounded as if Pierre Boulez, celebrating his eightieth birthday in the pit, had given up the ghost as well. His once controversially rapid reading of the score was, forty years later, overwhelmed by an even more 'controversial' staging, and some very poor singing too. But in all of this there are enfolded movements of a European cultural avant garde, which proceed through aesthetic discoveries and disclosures on the one hand and the notion of controversy on the other, and which tame these events for us, the public. Controversy and boredom accompany the avant garde and its anti-Modernist successors.¹

So it is that the rich, eclectic combinations of Schlingensief's spectacle, for it is above all his piece, resonate with the art world of today and with a recent history of film and video art in Germany. At once critical and centripetal, it is a composite of contemporary *bricolage* from Kurt Schwitters or Louise Bourgeois to Thomas Hirschorn and the Kabakovs, while Alexander Kluge and Hans Jürgen Syberberg are reformed and deformed in his vision, sometimes elliptically, sometimes with astonishing directness, as if composing for our eyes a knowledge of the various strands of contemporary art that have influenced

1 For Christoph Schlingensief see his website at <http://www.schlingensief.com>. The question of controversy as a mode of reception in operatic production is too general to deal with here, but suffice it to say that one of the roles of post-war Bayreuth since performance recommenced there in 1951 under Wieland Wagner has been to generate such a discourse on the very grounds of tradition. See Spotts 1994. Also see the Haus Wahnfried website, <http://www.wagnermuseum.de> and also <http://www.wagneroperas.com/>.

the production. If it has a merit, then, it is indeed to follow Syberberg's *Parsifal* in his remarkable explorations of *Germania* and its cultural-political aporia, which is a world issue, as we all know. Schlingensief pushes his predecessor's problematic onto the shoals of ethnic and gender politics, though how the vision enables a hearing of the music which was already there is hard to say. There has been nothing quite like Schlingensief in Bayreuth. But this is where the first things come after the last, and another aspect of the city's world culture, once set aside by the Wagners and Wagnerism, emerges as an adequate compartment for our time. Second, the uncanny leftover from the hardly-seeing of *Parsifal*'s set I rediscovered in some detail in the rococo decoration of the Neues Schloss.² Just a detail of a detail from the Schloss, a dolphin's snout and eye, encrusted, elaborate, blues and greens on a golden ground, translucencies and opacities worked into a figure; a residuum of histories of destruction and restoration too, a survival from rococo across centuries of war. This seemed to be made a bit like the set in its many, layered actions, a figuration at once simple, naïve in its idea yet becoming disjunctive. And this conjunction in its turn figures the sinuosity of the way in which a city can be a city in and of the world, in its own worlding of an historical self.

The builder, or should we say the thinker of this palace, Sophie Wilhelmine of Hohenzollern (1709–58), eldest child of Frederick William of Prussia and sister of Frederick the Great, together with her architects, the Galli Bibienas and Joseph Saint-Pierre, seems to have engaged in a seeing of the world in a way that, for me, distinguishes her *enfilade* of rooms from many another programme of rococo in Germany. It is in the thought-through and felt difference of the names for different parts of the world as phantasm that an architectural fantasy is realised as the complex poetic of these questions: what is Japan, what is Egypt, what is China; how do we know them against the continuum or drone of Enlightenment reason, classification and fascination with the perception, consumption and reproduction of these possible differences? Each room in turn throws back to the viewer a changed feeling of the self in space, regarding surfaces in the protean recomposing of their capacity to reflect, fragment or twist the vision – in delight of the exactness of their refusal to repeat. The Chinese and Japanese rooms are quite unlike one another in the ways that they organise the scale of reflection and fragmentation that are assimilated to different fantasies of the Levant (in the case of the Palm room) or the East but

2 For a comprehensive study of the house and the Markgräfin's work there see Krückmann 1998, 1: *Das Bayreuth der Markgräfin Wilhelmine*; 11: *Galli Bibiena und der Musenhof der Wilhelmine von Bayreuth*.

which, at the same time, emerge as different knowledges and symptoms of the impact of the 'other' in its figured multiplicity. It is impossible to imagine that Alain Resnais might have shot *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (*Last Year at Marienbad*) here and accomplished his fluid anti-narrative in this turmoil of distinctions that are the realisation or projection of Wilhelmine's desire in all its singularity as one of the great female thinkers of the Enlightenment.

The climax of the *enfilade* is certainly the ceiling of the Music Room with its Apollonian concert, firmly restoring us to the classical tradition of Western culture. Yet here for us, as subjects of this *dispositif*, as listeners of this world, the figure that stands for us in the painting is a little dog, the Markgräfin's dog, which she cuddles in her portrait by Antoine Pesne of 1750. Its death provoked an outburst from her to the effect that she understood that she could never go along with Descartes as the creature and she had always enjoyed real love and friendship. The dog was no Cartesian automaton, and in this domestic unfolding of a banal affection we are party to an enlightened critique of the foundations of the modern episteme in the infolding of such different orders of significance.³ Wilhelmine, who had, as the first born, defended her brother Frederick against their savage parent, as well as herself fighting his tyranny on her own account to marry the man of her choice, engaged in rivalry with her royal sibling on a range of then burning issues. Which of them, in their own musical composition, would make the best use of the new form of the *cavatina* as a proper successor to the outmoded *da capo* aria, or what would be the best application of the recently invented transverse flute?⁴ And alongside such a complex relationship, and against Frederick's own ruthless use of his dependent aristocracy as a military reserve, she and the Markgraf founded the University of Erlangen while spending up to the hilt on even more radical explorations of rococo building.

I would like to go further into the convoluted forms of the world in this province emerging as the ideological and economic base of a future European disaster. One of history's funnier 'what ifs' is the what if Wilhelmine had, as her father wanted, become the daughter-in-law of George II of Britain, and not stuck to her unimportant Margrave, even at the cost of pulling precedence in prising him from a younger sister? But I want rather to jump forward, to a print of 1871 in which we see Richard Wagner conducting a concert in Wilhelmine's greatest architectural achievement, her opera house. This astonish-

3 See Wilhelmine 1967, written by her in French. Also for a detailed biography Oster 2005. Clearly, despite her immense achievements it is not easy for her to escape being the sister of her brother.

4 See Müller-Lindenberg 2005 for a discussion of the musical achievements of the Markgräfin.

ing and bravura masterpiece of complex allegory, virtuoso craft and graciously original classicism is what had drawn Richard and Cosima to Bayreuth in their search for an ideal setting for his work. They had travelled there soon after the Franco-Prussian war and during the Paris Commune, both of which occupied Richard's then violent and satirical Francophobia. Doubtless this underlined the need for some exclusive, national specificity. The opera's interest for the Wagners was that it had the largest stage of any German theatre, but the print allows us to guess that it was hardly large enough for the composer's hyperbolic gestures. Indeed Cosima noted that 'it is totally unsuitable for our needs'. Of the rococo schema she wrote that it was an extraordinary décor, which, she reflected, 'recalls the German art of the sixteenth century, but does so in distorting it'.⁵ And that is that, more or less: trawl through her and Richard's writings, volume after stately volume, and through the massive tomes devoted to the pair, Ernest Newman's for example, and you will find hardly a mention of Wilhelmine and her spouse, nor the prehistory of Bayreuth. In this overlooking from within of Wilhelmine's Bayreuth, Cosima and Richard both effaced it and opened it to a new world, to becoming the world city of his music precisely because of its low or dubious standard of Germanness. They themselves had to bring a proper Germanness into being through the construction of the Festspielhaus and Haus Wahnfried, where they lived and Wagner housed his library with its vast collection of world mythologies and religions.⁶ In this new event Bayreuth became twice over the city of a possible vision of the world, each time a world of the folded phantasms of the accumulation and oblivion of historical cultures.

Patrice Chéreau's still famous production of the *Ring* of 1976, conducted by Pierre Boulez, may be thought of as the staging that made Wagner into appropriate material for the critique of cultural studies and radical historiography. Turning its back on the abstractions of the post-war period, it located Germanic myth in the industrial power and social relations of a modern bourgeoisie living out its fantasies of power and supremacy, of sexual and political domination, in a syncretic vision of a megalithic modernity. Its overblown classicism of gigantic interiors, *enfilades* and cheval mirrors, seemed involuntarily to mourn the lost narcissism of an aristocratic culture become no more than a trace in the triumph of industrial might. In 2005, seen as the post-industrial afterlife of Chéreau's vision, Schlingensiefel's mountains of waste and fragments could be seen to achieve a self-regarding and post-colonial rococo

5 Wagner 1980, pp. 356–7.

6 A copy of Wilhelmine's memoirs is to be found in the catalogue, which is online at the Haus Wahnfried website.

in which Wagner's own eclecticism is laid so bare, made so literal in its visibility, that it becomes inaudible. In Syberberg, one historical figure lies beside another, inert, leftovers, meaningless relics, puppets. Cared for and swaddled by Kundry, their relics enable us to enter the myth that has preceded them, as if it were reborn from their death; and once, I think, we glimpse the rococo opera, or maybe its image is just an illusion of these uncanny combinations. Syberberg's Kundry cradles the Festspielhaus under the tent of her hair, the inner sanctum under the care of the outsider. Everything here, like the meeting of Wilhelmine and the Wagners, is a miss; city of the miss, of misrecognition.

Now I want to tack more around the concept of the city of Bayreuth. Here is a short quotation from an internet blog, called the *Nietzsche Pages*,⁷ which broadcasts the word now, in our own time, and I do not know if the one student, talking to another about reading this great philosopher, knows any more about Bayreuth than I once did: words, names, musical scores and performances all tend to lose their specificity, their historical lives, as they are drawn into the arid discourses of the syllabus in critical theory or philosophy. So this contribution to the Nietzsche reading group looks a bit like a script from a film by Michael Cimino of thirty or more years ago, something that could have been written by the nerdy guy in Cimino's film *Peggy Sue got Married*:

Man, I'm reading the *Untimely Meditations* now. 'Wagner in Bayreuth' is a really interesting but sad essay. It is very easy to see how his [Nietzsche's] writings from this period were misappropriated by the Nazis. His brilliance still shines through in places and it's fascinating to think of the psychology regarding his relationship with Wagner and how influential he was. Wondering what other people thought about the book, especially in relation to his later stuff ...

Not so much the name of a city as a word in the philosopher's tide, Bayreuth here names the space of his violent ambivalence, his love of Wagner and his hatred and disillusion. This is neither a festival theatre, nor a rococo treasure house, but the eye of a storm in European politics and culture. Had Hitler won the Second World War, the Festspielhaus would have been framed by two huge neo-classical wings resembling the Pergamon Altar, but magnified to the power of unimagined conquest. What kind of a world city would this have made

7 Unfortunately this page has now vanished from the internet since being accessed in 2006.

Bayreuth? So what should a world city be? A place in which, around which, in different ways and at different times, the world is thought, un-thought, assembled, dismantled?

Or rather not, nothing so dramatic: my own first visit to Bayreuth, in 2001, cured me, if cure it was, of a forty-year-old recurring dream that I had from my adolescence onwards. The dream was that I was thrust onto a huge stage, roughly costumed to the right effect, to sing the role of Wotan, without being able to remember more than a few of the words and certainly unable to do any better musically than to hum along with the orchestra in a ghastly karaoke. Hum along to the *Ring*? It is not an obvious way of dealing with those operas, though it is possible to recall the motifs and try them under your breath from time to time. But as they are short, unstable, under constant transformation and differently grounded on each repetition, to do this would itself induce folly, an imitation of Nietzsche's fall, when he turned to Bizet, who can be hummed.⁸ As can Wilhelmine's opera *Argenore*.

But then arriving there in 2001, for a *Ring* cycle, and seeing the memorial plaque to the first Bayreuth cycle exactly 125 years after the event, marked the end of my dream, the death of a symptom as much as anything else, but also the end of a privation that has more than a little to do with the cultural and political histories of Europe – and, no doubt – the oddity of the Jew in this configuration of recent histories. Even though this is something that only emerges as you come to know those histories, that Bayreuth was to have been reconstructed as a cultural figure for the master race, a cliché, a redundancy and a truth. Even Hitler's bed at Wahnfried was an object of adulation, and the handsome young Wagner boys Wieland and Wolfgang who, after 1951, were to redeem Bayreuth, appear framing his face in a photograph – as if cultural bookends.

But in 2001 the city bore the presence of the contemporary world pretty well. As we were sharing two tickets between three of us, we had to enter

8 For a discussion of this see Rifkin, 'Carmenology' – Chapter 1.4 in the present volume. The following extract from Nietzsche's *The Case of Wagner, A Musicians' Problem*, published on 22 September 1888, is from <http://www.geocities.com/thenietzschechannel/wagner.htm>, accessed 30 July 2009: 'And really, every time I heard *Carmen* I seemed to myself more of a philosopher, a better philosopher, than I generally consider myself: so patient do I become, so happy, so Indian, so *settled* ... To sit five hours: the first stage of holiness! – May I say that the tone of Bizet's orchestra is almost the only one I can still endure? That other orchestral tone which is now in fashion, the Wagnerian, brutal, artificial, and "innocent" at the same time and thus it speaks all at once to the three senses of the modern soul, – how detrimental to me is this Wagnerian orchestral tone! I call it scirocco. I break out into a disagreeable sweat. *My* good weather is gone'.

into the ritual of sitting out alternate acts, a ritual pretty typical for the social group of two gay men together with one mother, who, of course, never sits out. We saw one trio again four years later, by which time I had worked out that the gardens just under the terrace of the theatre are Bayreuth's principal gay cruising ground at night, another requirement of any claim to be of this world. There are plenty of gay Wagnerians and their Jewish or other mothers, an interchange of nations, sexual politics, obsession, that certainly go back to the first audiences, to the virtuous French upper classes beating their way to the New Music, tardy counterparts of the Princess Metternich in Paris – who, along with Baudelaire, defended the true Wagner against the new generation and genre of philistines who came into being with his music. Transcending the boundaries and bigotries set by the Franco-Prussian war, the pilgrimage was an intertwining of radicalisms left and right, a mapping of political potentials and futures around this little town. In his *Travel Letters* from 1891, Mark Twain typically but finely seized on the figure:

This audience reminds me of nothing I have ever seen and of nothing I have read about except the city in the Arabian tale where all the inhabitants have been turned to brass and the traveler finds them after centuries mute, motionless, and still retaining the attitudes which they last knew in life. Here the Wagner audience dress as they please, and sit in the dark and worship in silence. At the Metropolitan in New York they sit in a glare, and wear their showiest harness; they hum airs, they squeak fans, they titter, and they gabble all the time. In some of the boxes the conversation and laughter are so loud as to divide the attention of the house with the stage. In large measure the Metropolitan is a showcase for rich fashionables who are not trained in Wagnerian music and have no reverence for it, but who like to promote art and show their clothes ...

Or again, in the same work:

Yesterday the opera was *Tristan and Isolde*. I have seen all sorts of audiences – at theaters, operas, concerts, lectures, sermons, funerals – but none which was twin to the Wagner audience of Bayreuth for fixed and reverential attention. Absolute attention and petrified retention to the end of an act of the attitude assumed at the beginning of it. You detect no movement in the solid mass of heads and shoulders. You seem to sit with the dead in the gloom of a tomb. You know that they are being stirred to their profoundest depths; that there are times when they want to rise and wave handkerchiefs and shout their approbation, and times when tears

are running down their faces, and it would be a relief to free their pent emotions in sobs or screams; yet you hear not one utterance till the curtain swings together and the closing strains have slowly faded out and died; then the dead rise with one impulse and shake the building with their applause. Every seat is full in the first act; there is not a vacant one in the last. If a man would be conspicuous, let him come here and recite from the house in the midst of an act. It would make him celebrated.⁹

If nothing else, the city here emerges as the palace of a new mode of attention, of an attitude to art whose reverential posture is perhaps only now unbending in the polymorphous forms of a new global art, and then was setting out the paradigms for a Modernist belief in art that was both terribly respectful and, at the same time, sublimatory. Wagner's work, in Twain's account, seems like the form and the object of an over-sublimation, anything but the apotheosis of a national myth that Cosima and Richard had already missed when they overlooked Wilhelmine.

But I warned you that this essay is a personal fantasy, so let me stop interrupting myself with this unselfish exposition! When I first, quite unintentionally, listened to the *Ring*, at the age of thirteen, on my parents' radiogram, a broadcast from Bayreuth – at which, when he later published his memoirs, I was to find the young Edward Said had been present in the audience – I suffered no ill effects, I imagine, from Wagner's notorious anti-Semitism. Unless it was that dream, my trying and failing to become Wotan. To a certain extent, much later on, and under the impact of cultural studies, memory studies, reading Adorno and post-Holocaust studies I came to feel a certain guilt about this and tried very hard to cultivate a loathing of the music and the city to which I had never yet been. There was certainly evidence that this should be a proper reaction – was not Grace Bumbry jeered at the 1962 performance of *Tannhäuser*? The first black woman to sing Venus – a jeering I think that could be heard on the radio, though not in the official recording, perhaps the best ever made of that opera.

And the evidence had been around long enough, longer than Hitler's choosing the city as his retreat and as his elected site of German culture; although Bayreuth was then planned to monstrously enshrine the contradictory fulfilment and denial of modernity that was a component of Nazism's nostalgia, with a gigantic architectural reframing of the Festspielhaus in concrete.

Here is another journalistic description of the place:

9 <http://www.twainquotes.com/Travel1891/Dec1891.html>, accessed 30 July 2009.

Bayreuth is, of itself, a negation; a stranger may wander long about its streets without coming into contact with anything suggestive of the living, active, and positive world, unless, indeed, he encounter a big Bavarian soldier. Of all dull towns I imagine Bayreuth, in its normal state, is to be the dullest. Moreover the utter sluggishness of the place has its impression heightened by the plentiful signs that, once on a time, there was life here ...¹⁰

I quote here from the account written by Joseph Bennett in his articles of August 1876 for the *Daily Telegraph*.¹¹ He at least goes on to sketch in a prettier picture of the time of the Margraves and their palaces, the city's 'fine old houses', 'respectable statues' – including that of Jean Paul Richter who lived there – and its many fountains. But it is a 'dead and gone grandeur', the town has a 'stately and dignified look, but is woefully faded. It is a tenth-rate Versailles' ... and so on, saved and even further ruined by the hordes of music tourists in search of all the commercialised Wagnerian knickknacks they can find.

Oddly – between the lines of this account – we can see that precisely what made Bayreuth deadly, what had killed it, were the rise of the German state and empire themselves, and then their collapse after 1918. In the course of that protracted process and its crushing finale, the golden period of the princes and margraves came to an end. The effective development, that is to say, of the national identity which Wagner sought to invent, could only come into being through the historical processes that were destroying the social, political and cultural identity of those very Bavarian châteaux through which he fantasised it, from Ludwig II's Neuschwanstein to Wilhelmine's Bayreuth. And it was through Wagner that the kitsch of nationalist nostalgia and of the tourist industries of the future were to be brought into a perfect accord.¹²

What we also understand, then, is that Bayreuth suited Wagner because it was an imploded identity of something German that, while if it were anything

10 Even this little text is redolent with echoes, of Wagner's giants Fasolt and Fafner, of Wilhelmine's embarrassment, recorded in her memoirs, when one of her own citizens is kidnapped by her brutish father for his guard of giant soldiers.

11 Quoted in Osborne 1992, pp. 223–4.

12 This was deeply felt and resisted by Wagner's granddaughter Friedlinde. Notoriously taking a distance from her family on the matter of Hitler's virtues, Friedlinde's concerns already hint at the need that will fly around the world of theory in years to come to detach Bayreuth from its unhealthy attachment. In the case of Theodor Adorno, his attachment to Jean Paul, who was a former inhabitant of Bayreuth, pulls it into a frame that can be disidentified from Hitler's enchantment.

but a world city, would be worlded by him and by his work, re-worlded with a certain history of the world that was his music drama: *this* world, to use Nietzsche's reflections in his essay 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth' of 1876, could have been a fulfilment of Europe's disparate histories:

The history of the evolution of culture since the Greeks is short enough, if one takes into account the actual distance covered and ignores the halts, regressions, hesitations and lingering. The Hellenization of the world and, to make this possible, the orientalization of the Hellenic – the twofold task of the great Alexander – is still the last great event; the old question whether a culture can be transplanted to a foreign soil at all is still the problem over which the moderns weary themselves. The rhythmic play against one another of these two factors is what has especially determined the course of history hitherto ... Thus there are between Kant and the Eleatics, Schopenhauer and Empedocles, Æschylus and Richard Wagner such approximations and affinities that one is reminded almost palpably of the very relative nature of all concepts of time: it almost seems as though many things belong together and time is only a cloud which makes it hard for our eyes to perceive the fact.¹³

Bayreuth is here the name for a possible epicentre of the coming into form of Western culture, and Wagner's opera house the strange classical shell for the performance of the profoundly Northern mythology that was embodied in the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Yet even in the opening paragraphs of this essay Nietzsche keeps his distance, though he is as yet far from the break of his 1888 essay 'The Case of Wagner'. In 1876 Nietzsche takes a turn that, in its turn, takes Joseph Bennett upside down:

In Bayreuth the spectator too is worth seeing, there is no doubt about that. A wise observer who moved from one century to another to compare noteworthy cultural movements would have much to see there; he would feel as though he had suddenly entered warmer water, like one swimming in a lake who approaches a current from a hot spring; this water must be coming from other, deeper sources, he says to himself, the water around it, which has in any case a shallower origin, does not account for it. Thus all those who attend the Bayreuth Festival will be felt to be untimely men:

13 <http://www.geocities.com/thenietzschechannel/rwbay.htm#4>, accessed 30 July 2009.

their home is not in this age but elsewhere, and it is elsewhere too that their explanation and justification is to be found.¹⁴

A world out of time, its very dullness is precipitated and brought to the notice of the whole world of European music and cultural snobs by the Wagners' installation there, and the world that delights and enslaves them is the one enfolded in his work. Nietzsche was surely prescient when, even as he supported Wagner's project, he was able to write:

For many things the time has come to die out; this new art is a prophet which sees the end approaching for other things than the arts. Its admonishing hand must make a very disquieting impression upon our entire contemporary culture as soon as the laughter provoked by parodies of it has subsided: let the merriment go on for a little while yet!¹⁵

But this world is also that of another world culture, one which is clearly embodied in the Haus Wahnfried, and especially in Wagner's library which forms its core. It is impossible when you stand there, stricken by the unwholesome gloom, not to be drawn into the fascination with and envy of a form of now

14 <http://www.geocities.com/thenietzschechannel/rwbay.htm#1>, accessed 30 July 2009.

15 <http://www.geocities.com/thenietzschechannel/rwbay.htm#1>. Later, in his posthumously published 'Nietzsche contra Wagner', he wrote: 'By the summer of 1876, during the time of the first Festspiele, I said farewell to Wagner in my heart. I suffer no ambiguity; and since Wagner had moved to Germany, he had condescended step by step to everything I despise – even to anti-Semitism ... It was indeed high time to say farewell: soon after, I received the proof. Richard Wagner, apparently most triumphant, but in truth a decaying and despairing decadent, suddenly sank down, helpless and broken, before the Christian cross ... Did no German have eyes in his head or pity in his conscience for this horrid spectacle! Was I the only one whom it pained! – Enough; this unexpected event struck me like lightning and gave me clarity about the place I had left – and also that shudder which everybody feels after he has unconsciously passed through a tremendous danger. As I proceeded alone I trembled; not long after, I was sick, more than sick, namely, weary – weary from the inevitable disappointment about everything that is left to us modern men for enthusiasm, about the universally wasted energy, work, hope, youth, love – weary from nausea at the whole idealistic lie and pampering of the conscience, which had here triumphed once again over one of the bravest – weary, finally and not least of all, from the grief aroused by an inexorable suspicion that I was henceforth sentenced to mistrust more profoundly, to despise more profoundly, to be more profoundly alone than ever before. For I had had nobody except Richard Wagner ... – I have always been sentenced to Germans.' From <http://www.geocities.com/thenietzschechannel/ncw.htm> accessed 30 July 2009.

outdated learning that indeed, when it took the form of the operas, enchanted Claude Lévi-Strauss and was to stimulate his project of a structural anthropology of myth.¹⁶

But more than the convolutions and intricacies of Wagner's reading, of the vision of his books as bloated objects in their bindings, his collection compels other ghosts to enter into an awful presence with his. These are such ghosts as haunt Sigmund Freud's library in London, as well as its empty shell in Vienna's Berggasse; or the spectral fake of Aby Warburg's library now restored in Hamburg, and its actual survival in London's Woburn Square. There the barely used floors of unexpected combinations, conjunctions and disjunctions of knowledge, the surviving effects of historical world cultures, projected from Warburg's thinking, like the mythologies collected as ancient works of art on Freud's desk, uncannily belong to the very configuration of thought that helped to force them into exile. Bayreuth is in these, just as they are in the space-time of Wagner's last opera; *Parsifal* is inextricable from this topology of knowing and of coming to know the world, as well as an exhausting of our knowledge of it in our own odd and desperate times – as Schlingensief's disaster has shown us. And, at the same time, the Markgräfin's work remains both a residuum of the past and a resource for the future of the musico-visual elements of modern culture as it comes to know itself in new and unexpected figures. Nietzsche again, now in 1888, trying to deny the hold of Wagner and Bayreuth, the better to suffer from it:

When in *this* essay I declare war upon Wagner – and incidentally upon a German 'taste' –, when I use harsh words against the cretinism of Bayreuth, the last thing I want to do is start a celebration for any *other* musicians. *Other* musicians don't count compared to Wagner. Things are bad generally. Decay is universal. The sickness goes deep.¹⁷

Bayreuth names a turning point, an axis, of these dilemmas, concerning the acceptance and rejection of Europe's present, and it accomplishes all this in the singular palimpsest that I have tried to disclose in this essay: dilemmas concerning our acceptance of history and its discomforts, which are global and exemplary.

16 See the famous Overture to Lévi-Strauss 1964, for the classic exploration of the relation between his concept of myth and Wagner's music.

17 Nietzsche, 'The Case of Wagner', at <http://www.geocities.com/thenietzschechannel/wagner.htm>, accessed 30 July 2009.

How much importance, then, should I set upon the question mark in my title? If it is a genuine enquiry, then it needs an honest answer, but if it is an irony, it needs an altogether less respectable response, perhaps one tainted with a proper dosing of bad faith. Bayreuth is a city of bad faith, whether it was the hereditary prince in the mid-eighteenth century trying – and who could blame him – to worm his way out of his military obligations to his father-in-law, the King of Prussia, or Wagner's famously abusing the first conductor of his *Parsifal* for being both indispensable to him and a Jew. It is easy enough to see how in these two instances alone there nestles a certain truth of history, of European history as it becomes world history in the paroxysms of the last century, and how, if Bayreuth is not unique, then it is at the very least exemplary and at the eye of the stormy processes of curiosity, of recognition, of coming to know and of neo-colonial brutality as they are imbricated in the new cultural forms of globalisation.

Yet again, in the first case does the question concern the word city, the word world or the name Bayreuth? If so then you can see that it is posed in bad faith, sneakily to disrupt some of the historical and theoretical constructions of what we still lovingly call modernity. And so it could be more interesting to let Bayreuth drop out of the question altogether, and to think about worlds and cities and how we have come to conceive of them as the spaces of a relation, and then, having done this, to bring the name, Bayreuth, back in to the equations, and to ask what would become of these discussions were it to be the name of a world city. Bayreuth, world city, once said, is a question and an answer.

So the question becomes something like this: what is it in Bayreuth that we are given to see and given to hear, what does Bayreuth give to see and to hear that spaces something we can call a world?

PART 5

Postscripts: Different Beginnings



The Paris Commune of 1871 and Political Print

I will start by showing you one print, a lithograph produced after the fall of the Second Empire, on 4 September 1870, and before the Commune upsurge of 18 March 1871 – in fact, early in 1871. Although it is quite striking and dramatic in its drawing and colour, it is neither refined nor professional and is clearly intended for mass consumption rather than more subtle contemplation.¹ Its political and social content are an extraordinary hodgepodge of themes and symbols, and it is through a reading of these that I hope to show you something of the value of the prints of this period as well as something of the nature of the problems involved in interpreting them.

There are in this print three figures. In the centre, a classical female figure, draped in white, carries a luxurious looking Tricolor and a frond of leaves. On our left is an agricultural labourer, holding a spade and leaning on a piece of red cloth trimmed with fur at the edge. He is wearing a red kerchief, and behind him is a scene of ploughing and the tending of animals. To our right is an industrial worker, carrying a metalworker's hammer, wearing protective clothing and a red hat. I say *industrial* because, in the background, there is a factory, not a small workshop, but a large building with other workers at its entrance. Overhead some stylised rays of light shine from the sky, and in a semicircle, beneath the feet of the three figures, is the slogan 'Labour is Liberty'. The republican figure herself is not Marianne, but wears a crown-like object, perhaps a crudely drawn representation for the city of Paris. But her face and limbs are not idealised, she is an ordinary person, and, despite her classical get-up, the whole print has therefore a proletarian character. At the same time, it has a religious look: the slogan at the bottom is matched by the rays at the top. They could be a reminder of the lines from Pierre Dupont's 'Song of the Workers' of the 1848 revolution, to the effect that some day a better wind will blow 'from the heavens or from the earth'. Anyway, we are confronted with a republican figure who carries the flag of the first Revolution, not a red flag, but whose clients are the rural and urban worker, and the basis of whose liberty is labour itself.

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1 I have not been able to print a satisfactory copy of this item. Illustration 1 includes some parallel problems of iconography and meaning.

Already, then, the print tells us quite a lot about the complexity of the historical situation. Its politics are composed both of the bourgeois Republican traditions of 1789, 1830 and 1848 and of the more recent development of an independent working-class politics under the Second Empire.² The agricultural labourer and the worker are seen alone as the basis of this republic, but its existence is seen only as an inspired hope. While the industrial worker is flanked by a red cloth, the cloth by the agricultural labourer is, as we have remarked, trimmed with fur. This could be a reminder of the conservative and royalist Assembly voted by the countryside in 1871, but I am by no means sure. Like many of the run-of-the-mill prints done during these few months – some by obviously amateur artists whose names and styles are seen neither before nor after – it has a complex and problematic relation to the social movement, and it is this that I hope to illustrate today – albeit in a very summary and cursory form.

However, I would like to make a number of preliminary points in order to locate my subject within the central theme of this session, 'Culture and Imperialism'. The Second Empire of Napoleon III fell to an opposition movement made up of the widest possible alliance of classes and political groupings, united around the issue of national defence, the retrieval of the hopeless situation brought about by the Franco-Prussian War. Temporarily, monarchists, bourgeois republicans and radicals had a common objective, but an objective that the reactionary forces within the alliance would only pursue at the expense of the popular masses. In short, the Thiers government was determined that the poor should pay for the war, and that this objective was overriding, more important, indeed, than the need to win the war or to end it.³ The behaviour of the Government of National Defence, or of National Betrayal, as it became known, provided the immediate grounds for linking national salvation with social salvation. The Communard upsurge of March 18 opened up the possibility of resolving all those matters, so pressing upon the popular masses of Paris – matters that were as little likely to be resolved by a bourgeois republic as by an Empire.⁴ So, as the Commune began to formulate its position and to implement a programme, inevitably it sought to negate the multifarious forms of economic, political, social and cultural oppression that had developed as

2 The whole concept of the 'working class,' its nature and composition is clearly problematic at this stage, and too complex an issue to discuss in this paper. But see Duveau 1946, and Rougerie 1964 and 1971.

3 See Choury 1960.

4 The unfolding of the Communard Programme in the process of institutional change is another difficult question but for an excellent discussion of the stages involved, see Bruhat 1971.

the lot of the working people under the Second Empire. Politically this process unfolded within a Babel of existing radical and republican traditions, as well as newly emergent socialist trends, but nonetheless the process of negation was deep-going and rooted in twenty years of struggle.⁵ Should we, as historians, let alone as Marxists, forget all this? Well, if we are to go by the joint Franco-American enterprise known as the 'Second Empire' exhibition, it seems that we should.

I am not saying that this is not an interesting exhibition, but if you look at the catalogue, or read the reviews, from Hilton Kramer to the French and British art comics, the political point is very clear. 'A forgotten period of enlightened patronage', 'bad people but great collectors', 'couldn't have been such bad people' – these are some typical catchphrases in these reviews. It is not just a question of whitewashing the Second Empire, it is also an historical fantasy, a pining for some unshakeable and glamorous image of past authority, a society presented as if free from anything political at all. The people, however you define them, do not figure.⁶ You might say that the exhibition is an attempt to forget or to overthrow the role of revolution in history. Within the ideology of bourgeois society the past seems often safer than the present: an empire that fell a century ago looks better than one which is falling today. Certainly the Second Empire today might be a better investment than the so-called 2,500-year old 'empire' in Iran. A central task of Marxist intellectuals is to criticise and undermine the hold of bourgeois ideology both in the present and over the past – the relationship of our views on the Second Empire and Commune with those of the exhibition is an important field of contention, and by no means unrelated to the struggle against Imperialist culture in general. At this point I must say how much I appreciate being able to address the Marxist Caucus, the more so in Washington, now, when, for a second time since the war the Iranian people have thrown off the domination of U.S. imperialism and its British, French and German allies. We have much to learn from them, and wish them well in a difficult struggle ahead.

However, to return to the culture of the Commune, a number of historiographical questions need to be outlined in order to understand the central problems involved in its study. First, the original work done in collecting and

5 For the survival of old traditions of republicanism, see Soboul 1971. 'L'An II,' and the essays following on 1848 and 1871 by Gossez and Rougerie.

6 A parallel might be drawn with the non-appearance of Courbet Communard in his centennial show, except via two drawings. Of the many virulent cartoons lampooning his politics, none were shown, though there were plenty attacking his style. At the same time reviews of the exhibition were added to his file in the Archives de la Police.

collating the cultural production of the period (prints, broadsheets, satirical journals, songsheets, posters, etc.) was done by the reactionary publicists of the Third Republic. In the first years after the Commune, their work constituted an integral part of the process of repression, a form of justification of the massacres and deportations. In order to treat the insurgents as less than human it was necessary to denigrate every aspect of their life and works. So, in Firmin Maillard's *Les Publications de la Rue pendant la Commune*, a superficially harmless antiquarianism is sustained by a constant needling and ridicule, unreasoned, unexplaining, but developing the bourgeois ideology of recuperation and revenge. His approach is paralleled in that of the anti-Commune cartoonists and the endless collections of anti-Commune journalism – 'histories', *mémoires*, biographical sketches, horror stories and so forth.⁷ The virulent and complex hounding of Courbet must be located within this context, and, indeed, can only be understood within it. However, we find that the need to discredit the Commune was matched by the contradictory need to forget it and to treat the whole episode of the collapse of the Second Empire as an unfortunately painful transition between different forms of government. In 1888 Grand-Carteret published his monumental history of Customs and Caricature in France, which remains a necessary, if faulty, source of information. Even seventeen years after the event he felt no need at all to explain or examine the development of the Communard print. Mechanistically judging it against the lofty standards of great and safe individuals – Daumier, Régamey, Cham – he is forced to attribute its specific characteristics to artistic incompetence on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to immorality. Of the period immediately following 4 September 1870, he writes:

A people dignifies itself in letting those who have deceived it, or led it to ruin, depart in silence, but lowers itself in throwing garbage in the face of those who were its rulers.⁸

And while he judiciously praises one anti-Communard piece of Said, his analysis of the Commune as a whole goes this far:

I have just said that what distinguishes the prints of the Commune is that filthy caricature carries the day over all the others ...⁹

7 See the works of G. d'Heylli, Catulle Mendès, Henry Morel, the Goncourts, Dumas, etc., all such truthful journalists that they continually contradict each other.

8 Grand-Carteret 1888, p. 423.

9 Ibid., p. 436.

It is an interesting reflection on bourgeois ideology, then, that he dismisses the republican and revolutionary caricature with a crudeness and vulgarity that is matched only by that which he imputes to it as the grounds for its dismissal!

Clearly, if you consider the problem of interpreting the one print I have shown you, this kind of approach won't do, but the second historiographical problem is this: with a few exceptions, the progressive and left-wing historians of the Commune have not done much better. Especially since the end of the War in 1945 there has been a continuous and profound development of the social and political historiography of the Commune. Within this the political print has, in the main, been given the role of background illustration, treated as a form of substantiation or decoration to a broader history, but not as being itself a field of struggle and of the emergence of various forms of consciousness. Also, I believe, certain historians are themselves intimidated by culture, and accept too readily the norms and standards formulated by Grand-Carteret and his kind. Because Communard culture is not 'great' culture, they apologise for its crudeness, implying that if only the Commune had had more time, then indeed it might have achieved a higher cultural level – a more bourgeois culture, that is to say.¹⁰ And when a Communard artist, the poet Eugene Pottier for example, has achieved a fame that is generally acknowledged, then he can be used, safely, for hagiography. Yet consider the output of prints during the nine months after 4 September – the output mainly done and circulated in Paris. In the de Vinck collection in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, there are over 3,000 items; in the ten bound volumes to be found in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London there are nearly 2,000 items; and Grand-Carteret estimates a total output of 4,500. Putting together songs, cartoons, and the purely political and organisational verbal posters of the Commune itself and of the Arrondissement committee, I suppose that about 4,000 items is a fair estimate. An account book of the Commune which exists in the War Archives in Vincennes shows that one of its official posters was ordered in an edition of 6,000 pasted up, and a small number for the records.¹¹ The editions of the more popular satirical prints and songs is reckoned to have been very large, though few reliable figures can be discovered. However there were enough around for provincial prefects to be chasing them and destroying them at the end of the 1870s. A modest guess of the number of items circulated, sold and posted up within the city of Paris must run to something like twelve to fifteen million in this single period of nine months. Are these works to be treated simply as a

10 For instance, Kaplow 1971.

11 Archives Historiques de la Guerre, Vincennes, box Ly II.

background decoration, or can they be seen as rather more than that? Are they not, in fact, a forming element within the struggles that formed them?

I think that I will not be accused of using some crude 'reflection theory' if I argue that the violence of many of the prints, both for and against the Empire, the Commune or the Republic has something to do with the violence of the conflicts. It is a violence which really draws more on the traditions of 1794 and 1830 in its visual references, but which involves the entire development of political and social life after 1848. Remember that the Empire was a profoundly repressive régime, that its censors imposed such tight limits in all fields of literary and political expression as to ensure a resort to circumlocution, allegory and obscure reference. Indeed the censors were so eagle-eyed that they could read subversion into the most innocent of texts and images, and while everyone knows of the prosecution of Baudelaire's poetry, the suppression of such dangerous images as Garibaldi visiting cards can go unnoticed. Not only can we trace the different phases and class alliances of the social struggles that emerged from 1868 on an almost day-to-day basis in the political prints, but we can also see the striving after forms capable of expressing and transforming the content of these struggles. If there is an unusual violence in many of the images produced after 4 September (the date on which censorship was effectively suspended), a violence which Grand-Carteret is happy to describe as filth, it is a function of this search for an embodiment of political experience in literal and symbolic imagery. If you look through a representative collection, you will find images that make Redon or Moreau seem less original than bourgeois art history would have us believe. This can be illustrated as well in the prints done to discredit the Commune as in those done to sustain it, and the attacks by the Versailles government on the women of the Commune is as good an example as any.

One aspect of the anti-Commune prints, which they share without exception, is their lack of an argument, their brutal presentation of the Communards through a parody of the symptoms of working-class oppression (alcoholism for example), the imputation of dishonesty or hysteria to petit-bourgeois or *déclassé* Communards (Courbet), and so forth. Often appearing in traditional serial form (*Folies de la Commune*, by Cham, or *Agonie de la Commune*, by Marcilly), they depict the recent past and the present as a peepshow, horrible but distant, peopled with grotesques and criminals. The women, accused by the Versaillais of burning the city of Paris, were signalled out for the wildest abuse – proclaiming a rosy dawn of red wine, mindlessly denouncing men and family in their popular clubs, always fat, ugly and hysterical. One, from the series *The Zodiac*, by Xiat, is a woman's face square and cracked with a savage draughtsmanship, a clumsy hand clutching a tankard and the pun for its title: 'A scor-

pion in her ugly mug'. As I have suggested, these prints were done to justify a massacre that made the June Days seem like a tea party. They are profoundly indicative of the bourgeois' fear of the social upheaval that confronted them, and, in particular, their fear of the emancipation of women. In his great novel of the Commune, *L'Insurgé*, Jules Vallés touched the heart of this movement:

The women were everywhere – a great sign! When the women are involved, when the wife pushes her man, when she seizes the black flag that floats over her cooking pot in order to plant it between the cobblestones, then the sun will rise on a city in revolt.¹²

It is essential not to underestimate the depth of hatred felt for each other by the main contenders, even though it is still necessary to distinguish the quality of that hatred, and this touches on another historiographical problem. This arises, or will arise, I suspect, from a need to re-explain the Commune and Marx's commentary on it without the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is a requirement of the politics of Eurocommunism and its negation of Marx's analysis of society as a class dictatorship. You will be able to see traces of it in some articles in a journal called *La Commune*, in particular an article on just this subject of women, an article in which antagonism tends to vanish.

The Republican and Communard prints are the product of a variety of social and cultural forces, and even at their crudest are engaged in some kind of an argument with reaction, some engagement in explaining and exposing its social, political or economic motives. There are, of course, professional cartoonists or journalists who went with the tide – Said, whom I have mentioned, was violently against Prussia and the Empire, showed sympathy for the uprising of 18 March, but, in time, turned against it. Daumier stood aside and brooded on the tragedy. A handful actively supported the Commune. Moloch, for example, who provided, in his series on Priests, the most withering contribution to the anti-clerical movement. Pilotell, a *déclassé* from the Beaux-Arts, produced advanced Jacobin propaganda up to the point that he became a functionary of the Commune, when his time was taken up. The struggle for a Parisian Commune can be found in his work as early as October 1870 in *The Commune held back by Ignorance and Reaction*,¹³ and he provided commentary on political

¹² Vallés 1972, p. 131.

¹³ Normally thought of as being a piece from the very eve of the Commune, in actuality it appears in the *Depôt Légal* in October, 1870. The importance of dating the work is thus clear, but made difficult by the abolition of censorship during the Commune itself. Most records vanish from March to July of 1871.

events, the suspension of rents, anti-clericalism and other themes. Despite the difficulty of dating and phasing so many prints, it is a task to be done, and one that will contribute enormously to an understanding of the collapse of the Empire, the Commune and the origins of the Third Republic. But within this mass of material the working-class movement also develops some artists of its own, some of whom, as I have said, are otherwise unknown. One, whose history in fact covers nearly twenty years was Gaillard fils, son of the great shoemaker and contentious Chef de Barricades of the Commune (Gaillard père), and himself a painter on porcelain.

This said I would like to conclude by commenting on some of these prints.

Figure 49: A patriotic, republican image of the Franco-Prussian war in which punishment is meted out equally to Napoleon III, the German Emperor and Bismarck. The famous line from the refrain of the Marseillaise, illegal under the Empire, forms the motto and asserts the universality of the republican idea. The image itself is almost identical, though reversed, to one of the execution of Louis XVI done in 1793 in the Hennin Collection in Paris. The print is thus deeply resonant of Republican traditions at a number of levels, inherited, it would seem, directly from the first Montagne, via the internationalism of 1848, and linked to the politics of 1870.

Figure 50: By Pilotell, borrowing a motif from the 1830 Revolution, the famous pear, here used to signify the danger of an Orleanist revival in the Bordeaux Assembly of 1871. This kind of borrowing enrages Grand-Carteret, who sees it as a form of *lèse-majesté*, but it is typical of the period immediately before the Commune, making the most use possible of a language already understood. The shadowy guillotine hovering over the decaying pear calls for a militant republic with an image of carefully conceived brutality. The usual line of the art historians with Pilotell is that he could not draw.

Figure 51: Rosambeau is one of those names that appear only in the Commune, and Carteret thinks that he may have been an actor, though there is no evidence for this as far as I know. Thiers, wearing the red hat of the First Republic, is no more than a figure of Punch, but his real aspirations, seen in his reflection, are to serve a new Orleanist régime. The cartoon again typifies the attempt to present an image that is both immediate and analytical, that parodies yet describes a political process. Thiers was hounded with pears.

Figure 52: From Moloch's series, *Les Prêtres*. This discovery of fresh female bones in the Church of Saint Laurent led to a wave of hatred against the



FIGURE 49 *A patriotic, republican image of the Franco-Prussian war*

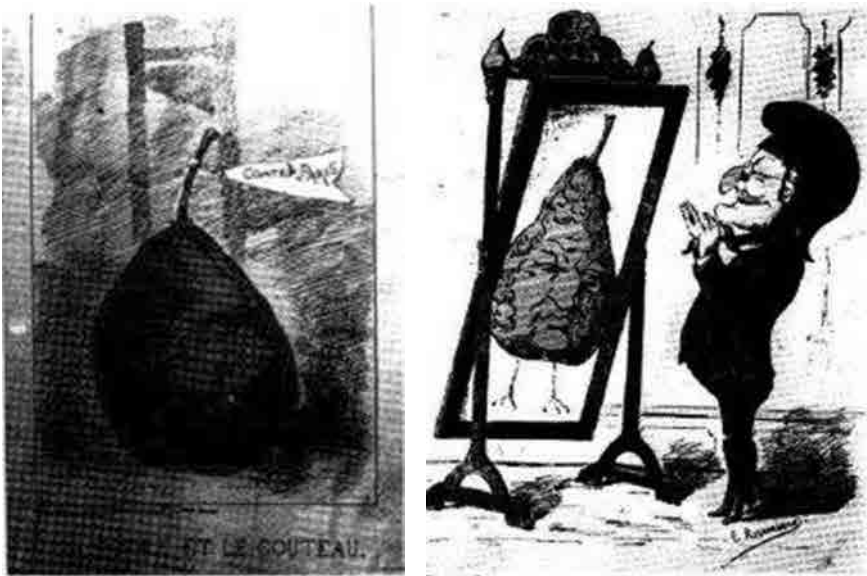


FIGURE 50 *By Pilotell, borrowing a motif from the 1830 Revolution*

FIGURE 51 *Rosambeau*

priesthood which had long been accused of degeneracy and corruption. The Commune had decreed the separation of church and state ‘in the name of freedom of thought’. Moloch, who invariably depicts his priests as sleek or decaying bourgeois, here shows them worshipping the Empire in a plea for

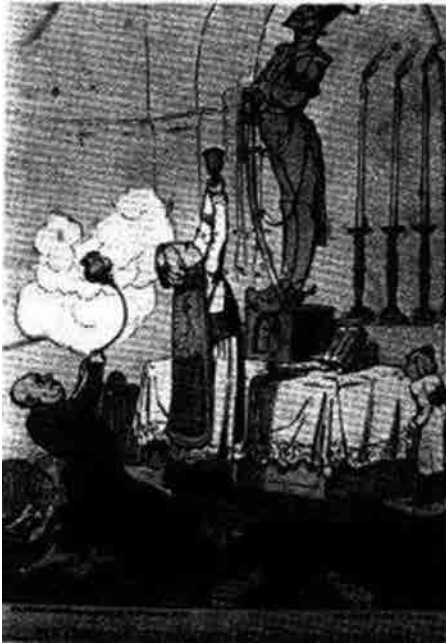


FIGURE 52 *From Moloch's series, Les Prêtres*



FIGURE 53 *Gaillard fils, at the age of 21, wrote and illustrated a short-lived paper called Les Orateurs des Clubs during the election campaign of 1868.*

deliverance from the Commune. After the Commune, Moloch, who played no official role and was therefore not prosecuted, was forced to return to circumlocution – see his series, *Silhouettes*.

Books and Articles

Figure 53: Gaillard fils, at the age of 21, wrote and illustrated a short-lived paper called *Les Orateurs des Clubs* during the election campaign of 1868. Alongside his eccentric father he participated in a number of the major political events leading up to the Commune, and after the Commune fled with him to Switzerland. There they ran a café and celebrated the Commune in paint, print and poetry, earning the unjust amusement of some of their old comrades. Like other Communards who returned to Paris after the Amnesty of 1879–80, their politics were a whole generation out of date. But Gaillard fils's cartoons of the Commune period are important and are closely linked with many of the cul-

tural preoccupations of skilled workers. This image of early March 1871, attacks Thiers's peace moves as based purely on the needs of the bourgeoisie to return to their luxurious lifestyle, so rudely interrupted by losing the war. Thiers stands on a pile of expensive foodstuffs on the 'Altar of Peace at Any Price', while round him black-coated financiers pray 'Yes Thiers'. He is dressed as a butcher, the priests surround him with incense, and the Theatre of Bordeaux, which housed the Assemblée, can be seen behind. His speech is a blank. The cartoon is virtually an illustration of the popular song of Emile Debreux, 'Paris for a Beefsteak', and blends a variety of political themes in a single image. Gaillard fils in all this work shows a remarkable ability to use a real motif, here the incense, elsewhere the smoke of battle or a landscape, to concentrate his image, throw it into the face of his audience and give it urgency. He also adapts a range of traditional symbolism to a more popular objective. I think that this work suffices to underline my assertion of the importance of the political print in this period.

The seminal attempt to historically categorise the culture of the Commune is Schulkind 1951. Otherwise see the *Colloque de Paris* cited above. The latter has a section on culture, see especially Rebérioux 1971. For reproductions of cartoons see Ducatel 1973; G. Soria, 'La Grande Histoire de la Commune:' and M. Troche, in the centennial exhibition catalogue of the Musée Municipale of Saint Denis, 1971. See also my 'Cultural Movement and the Paris Commune'.

For an Artist ...

For an artist, it is not one's conscience, but one's *talent*, making cowards of us all. Cardew's courage to dismiss an earlier abstract artistry of his own is indeed heroic. His career bears a comparison to D.H. Lawrence. Both set aside an evocative use of the language of their medium for a kind of 'message' of sorts. Cage in his own way did likewise. In this regard Cornelius Cardew is not in bad company. However, it is in a work such as *The Great Learning* which I feel Cardew found a unique equanimity of means between a musical poetry and his political beliefs – something akin to what Christian Wolff is doing with similar concerns. As perhaps the last indigenous esoteric composers surviving on this planet, I deeply mourn Cardew's death. He wrote beautifully about my own music and played it exquisitely. Perhaps we are not that far apart than one might think. There will always be ... Cornelius Cardew.

MORTON FELDMAN, 18 March, 1982



As Feldman remarks, Cardew was an artist. There are, as yet, no other words for the phenomenon. Cardew knew this, what an artist is or should be was a vexed and troubling question of his moment – as it still is, but differently. Then, perhaps, the simple and stark division between the avant garde and the revolutionary artist seemed like a habitable space, one well-furnished with historical disappointments and unfinished conflict. Restlessly, Cardew displaced here and there the problem of how else what he was, what he was fated to be, could be named or thought. He set it beside himself, as if beyond his control, in the graphic score, the instruction or the free association of the collective that he would motivate but not direct – the Scratch Orchestra, or a performance of *Schooltime Compositions*. He understood that it would be strange indeed if two performances from *Treatise* were to resemble one another. But if this were

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one model for freeing the performer from the tyranny of the artist and the listener from the tyranny of performance, and both from the tyranny of comparison and expertise, then the democratic centralism of the Communist Party, to which he came to subscribe, was another model of an incommensurable freedom. Radically separate from the others, it was a fully voluntary decision of servitude or sacrifice, of deliverance from the fear of the delusion of freedom through acceding to the necessity of class struggle and its 'inevitable' outcome in a dictatorship of the proletariat. 'Freedom is the recognition of necessity' ..., as Engels put it in his *Anti-Dühring*.

In all of this Cardew belonged to his time, to the protracted moment of transition to what came to be called post-modern culture, the instatement of the aporetic as a norm rather than the struggle for a definitive outcome or a specific truth. And while he decided to do battle for an outcome – a revolution – there can be little doubt that the cumulative influence of his work was, like that of other great Modernists, Cage, Nam June Paik, George Brecht, a profound inspiration for something other and contrary to that desire. And at the same time that his and their aleatoric and collective work so perfectly opened a perspective between some of the increasingly plural singularities of the time, together they had little meaning for the exponential flourishing of identities of otherness that was just to come – which, precisely, needed newly purposive aesthetics, just as they were to have little use for the priority of class struggle as the main aim (in the world today).

If, in this way, Cardew negated the negation, and then again, he disclosed not so much the possibility of transcending the musical avant garde to which he belonged, but its immanence in each and every such gesture that he came to make; and he found, even if he did not recognise, that the activism of the one resembled the activism of the other but only in contingency at the moment of performance. *Carpe diem*: on one day art and politics might look alike, but if the outcome could be predicted it could never be more than a tautology – something Zhdanov had hoped for in the closing years of Stalin's régime. So the day had to be daily seized if we were to blind ourselves to this, and making art in this way became too pragmatic. Look at the photographs of the comrades on their lorry, singing in the demonstrations, they look corralled, not free, artists under siege, a siege of their own invention. Necessity has got out of hand.

This relation of art and politics is, then, as much a matter of chance as the throwing of sticks to get a pentagram for I Ching; the very notion is no more than a guide to contingency. So if Cardew turned his back on an acknowledged principle of chance in both composition and performance, the new chance, the chance taken by the political militant, was understood only as a matter of necessity. With each negation he negated, Cardew discovered how much we

are enchained by the necessity of the chance in which we live. Cardew waltzed with negation, swift-footed and certain, and that's one reason he could be a kind of leader of the round. There could be no higher virtue than to denounce oneself, no skill more virtuously ratified, and if the true victim of his critique of Stockhausen was his self, a former self, then what he denounced triumphed again in the very virtuosity of his reflexive gesture. Psychoanalytically this is the nervous gesture of an ill-founded and uncertain narcissism.

And it's true, perhaps, that for a good Marxist-Leninist, sacrifice was, on one side, the face of pure love; but then on the other it was the face of an absolute interest. The coincidence between a law of history and the interest of the exploited class meant this – that one was purely the instrument of this law and impurely for this class. And in straddling the narrow gap between a social agreement and a moral law, a gap so narrow that, in our time, art and politics can never pass through it hand in hand, perhaps – probably – we neglected the very material conditions that we sought to change, and which determine over and over the Janus figure of art and politics; of the freedom and servitude they owe to one another in order for the world so to be figured that we can begin to see where we are, and what we are.

That's why, I guess, that if Cardew was a great artist, he was a melancholy one, and the thread that binds him to Eisler in exile, the enraged defeated Schubert of *Das Wirtshaus*, and that turns in his hands into the perversely classical and astonishingly haunting beauty of his rewriting of Irish rebel songs, is the broken thread of defeat's unending. Or, this broken thread is the tradition of the avant garde, its perfectly triumphant figure, and if – in Marx and Engels's phrase – 'no country that enslaves another can itself be free' meant that the English revolutionary must first free Ireland, then Cardew's very aesthetic was bound by this thread to its own effacement, to becoming soundless, unvoiced – unless, that is, Ireland itself remain enslaved.

The more Cardew's later work pushes out into the figuring of the principles of revolutionary politics, the odder it becomes and the stranger its beauty. The closer he pushes it to a political objective, the more it seems to splinter into the oddity of a setting, the setting of an avant-garde modernism, to a political intrigue for which it was never destined to be more than a metaphor. And in this constricted space of misrecognition there arises a new beauty, *Four Principles on Ireland* for example, and sometimes a banal clumsiness, *Smash the Social Contract*, and between them they enable us to hear a warning and a lure, singing of the injustices in which we live today.

No Thing to Regret ...



FIGURE 54 *Die Worte der Vorsitzenden*

For a young left-wing academic in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as for almost anyone else for that matter (but that both is and is not the heart of the question: the part that is hardest to acknowledge – that one is, in all too many respects, like almost anyone else), it was desirable to have an object in a world filled with lost objects; or, even better for those who had already lost some, an object of loss. That, I suppose, is part of what it was to grow up in the society of the spectacle just at the moment it was first named as such, already an intellectual *and* a fashion victim, both of which I hope I have remained.

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Once I began to size up the political terrain I began to envy a whole number of different individuals for the way in which their loss or their attachment to lost objects located them so fluidly, so tragically or even comically, in the greater flow of historical events to which we were inclined to believe that we belonged. 'Men (sic) make their own history ... *hic Rhodus, hic salta*' and so forth; so if the Stalin-Hitler pact or the suppression of the Hungarian uprising and Khrushchev's not very secret speech or the deposition of Dubček was your object of loss, Communism your lost object and 'actually existing socialism' your melancholic introjection of any one or any combination of these, you were indeed in clover.

You had something to talk about, to lament, a source of guilt as of ostentatious self-negation and, moreover, new ways of thinking about history and the history of objects in the commodity system that was and is our natural habitat.

That's why Maoism was such a stroke of luck for me: it was the best possible faraway thing, the phantasm-object-critique of the whole baggage of the West from its old to its new decrepitudes, from its capitalist excesses to its ageing Communists in constant sorrow. For a number of years after the defacing of the Ming tombs in China, some time in 1966, that grandly traditional, revolutionary vandalism sufficiently represented my own feelings towards the hallowed and stifling mellowness of the university, its intellectual vacuity, and it also stood for something outside the frame, my own frame and the framing metaphors of the worn-out narcissism of unending historical respect – an attitude that my approximate generation is credited with having affronted and undermined – I hope. Yet even as I became involved I could envision the end of the affair, that I would sort out my life according to desires that had yet to name themselves, and that this singular event would turn out to be transient and an ego-ideal, if one for which attachment could never quite fade away.

For it was not the case that I would ever dare to step too far out of the frame, actually to go to China; importantly, as this timidity was also a talisman against the dreadful literalism that had led to the hung-over melancholy of the moment; '... *hic salta*' was never an injunction on which I was prepared to stake too much. Rather I was happy to play it all for the *n*th time, too, as farce. Provided, that was, I could learn to read the Marxist canon, at least try to stand up for social justice and against imperialism and still go clubbing, as well as attending plenty of *vernissages* on the London scene, sensuous, aesthetically radical *soirées* at the Arts Lab in Drury Lane, eat rice and peas in the West Indian dives of Westbourne Grove and still languish in fascination and velvet loons before the Piero di Cosimo in the National Gallery.

It was hardly necessary to make a strong argument for living out these social and ethical catachreses if the work of the avant garde in art as in sex,

for example, could as such conjugate with the work of politics as well as the supervening conception of the historic social class, the working class, as both at once central, foundational and marginal to the *socius* as a whole. This argument allowed for a flexible and tactical positioning, a speaking for and a speaking from, of what we were soon to come to call the speaking subject or, later on, the performance of the subject. To be on one's own side and another, and for this to be as if a viable universal or a proper judgement was, in academic terms for example, to have both a discipline and its critique; or in politics to be inside and outside the revolutionary class at the same time or by turns. This was neither a matter of sincerity nor its opposite, but of a form of general desire to be elsewhere and of a specific desire to be just one – in the Cartesian mode.

Or you can begin to see that this question of being both in the frame and out of the frame, both at the heart of the matter and at the same time the matter's supplement, was indeed altogether the heart of the matter; not an either/or, but a suspense story, a story in suspense. As if, again, one was already, always a ghost of Marx or Freud, ghosting the future's script for one's self out of the theoretical deferrals yet to come. And, in a way, this was just as well, as it turned out to make for something different from the old decrepitudes and opened the space for a lot of intellectual adventures that might be able to unfold without a proper starting point or having too often to stop and throw down an anchor: even if all too many of them were to freeze in the institutional ice of a discipline.

When I daydream about what the object-like texture of all this might be, how I might make a symbol for all or some of this, out of something illusory, impossible, deluded and desiring, sometimes I think that I would like it to be a painting. At first this seems right because it is possible the idea that 'painting is dead', which has risen and fallen in dramatic turns over the last 30 years of art theory and criticism, in part owes its currency to these unfolding processes themselves, to the putting of substance, in all its immateriality, beyond the frame. But clearly painting is far from dead and, indeed, is alive from its very first recorded appearances, in a still triumphant objecthood. The mistake in thinking painting was dead is that the theoretical discovery of outside-the-frame was confused with the notion that what is inside is therefore limited when, of course, it was the inside's own, elliptical illimitability that made such a knowledge possible in the first place. So a painting, an easel painting, should do for the object that I want – but that is far too easy.

It's far too easy to get away with a category and a near infinity of single parts, so I must look for something more limited, a reminder like Milton's olive leaves that I might feel and hold and sense, a sharp reminder of the kitsch of wanting as well as its oceanic potential.

Hand in pocket, I try to rediscover myself fingering some smooth, shiny little object, with all the kitschy feel of mass culture, imitation craft, like the material of so many of my studies and reflections yet to come. I can follow the forms, ripples like the rays of a sun, the outline of a shape which must be that of a face, a profile, and on the other side some coarser metal, cheap and rough with a badly attached pin which is crumbling loose. The pin pricks my finger and I have to lick the bloody trickle. But that's why it's in my pocket, it might have fallen off in the hurly burly of a demonstration, and I loved it very much, my Mao badge, my first one, far too much to lose. Though where it is today, I have no idea.

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